MARCH

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MARCH

PALM-OIL PATRIOT
by BRIAN O'BRIEN

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by JOE ABRAMS

B. B. FOWLER

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FOR VICTORY

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No-Nick Chip-Proof Bevel Edge
•
Full 10 Oz.
•
Ideal for Beer, Highballs, Water and Every Beverage

ILLUSTRATION ½ ACTUAL SIZE

Just think! A matched set of six, best-quality, big 10-ounce Victory drinking glasses, and on a coupon offer so amazing it may never be duplicated.

What makes these glasses so amazingly unusual is the full color design, different on each glass, saluting each different branch of our armed forces . . . Army, Navy, Marines, Air Corps, Coast Guard and even the Defense Worker. ALL are "toasted" and honored. There are TWO illustrations on EACH glass. We have illustrated what you see from the front. You'll get a real kick out of the back view, when you turn the glass around. In good taste for young and old. So, readers, accept this coupon offer now, while this special arrangement is on. You'll be glad you did!

IF YOU THINK YOU MUST PAY $3, $4, OR $5 FOR SUCH UNUSUAL GLASSES

Then You'll Be Delighted When You Read the Coupon

SEND NO MONEY JUST MAIL THE COUPON

INSPECT...USE...SHOW YOUR FRIENDS ON THIS NO-RISK OFFER

Be sure to mail your coupon today. When your set of 6 full-color Victory Glasses, toasting our armed forces, reaches you, give postman only $1.49 plus C.O.D. postage. Consider them "on approval." See the excellent quality glass, the perfect shape. Note the safety chip-proof bevel edge. Most important, be happy with the vivid full-color illustrations, different front view and back view, toasting our armed forces. Use your set for 10 days, put them to every test. If you aren't 100% pleased beyond words, return the set and your money will be immediately refunded. Victory Glasses make every party a sure success, are ideal for everyday use, too. Timely, exclusive and such a wonderful coupon value, you'll be delighted. Readers, be the first in your set to Toast Our Armed Forces for Victory! Now, today, mail the coupon.

MAIL COUPON NOW... *See for Yourself*

FREE!

MATCHED COASTER SET

For prompt action in mailing the coupon, not only do you receive your set of 6 different full-color Victory Glasses at an amazing low price, but also you'll receive a set of 6 valuable and useful coasters, free of all extra charges. Don't wait. Mail coupon now.

MASON and CO., Dept. P-5
154 E. Erie St., Chicago, Illinois

NO-RISK 10-DAY TRIAL OFFER

Send me a set of 6 big 10-ounce illustrated Victory glasses and the free set of coasters. On arrival I will deposit with postman $1.49 plus postage charges on the iron-clad guarantee that if I am not completely satisfied, I may return the set of glasses and coasters in 10 days for complete refund without question.

☐ MONEY ENCLOSED (If money with order, glasses come postpaid.)

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(Print Plainly)

Address.....

City..... State.....

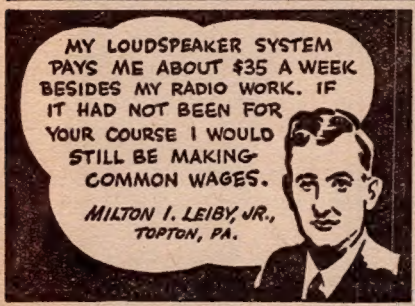
☐ **SPECIAL:** Send me 3 complete sets, with FREE coasters for $3.49. (Due to the demand and our limited supply, only 3 sets may be ordered by one customer.)

Do You Want Success Like This in RADIO

BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR COURSE I OBTAINED MY RADIO BROADCAST OPERATOR'S LICENSE AND IMMEDIATELY JOINED STATION WMPC WHERE I AM NOW CHIEF OPERATOR.
HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 MADISON ST., LAPEER, MICH.

I WAS WORKING IN A GARAGE WHEN I ENROLLED WITH N. R. I. I AM NOW RADIO SERVICE MANAGER FOR M------ FURNITURE CO. FOR THEIR 4 STORES.
JAMES E. RYAN
119 PEBBLE COURT
FALL RIVER, MASS.

CLIPPING YOUR COUPON GOT ME STARTED IN RADIO. I AM NOW IN CHARGE OF THE RADIO DEPARTMENT FOR THE AMERICAN AIRLINES AT CLEVELAND.
WALTER B. MURRAY
AMERICAN AIRLINES, MUNICIPAL AIRPORT, CLEVELAND, OHIO.


MY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM PAYS ME ABOUT $35 A WEEK BESIDES MY RADIO WORK. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR YOUR COURSE I WOULD STILL BE MAKING COMMON WAGES.
MILTON I. LEIBY, JR.,
TOPTON, PA.

I HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR MYSELF FOR TWO YEARS, MAKING BETWEEN $200 AND $300 A MONTH. BUSINESS HAS STEADILY INCREASED.
ARLIE J. FROEHNER
300 W. TEXAS AVE.
GOOSE CREEK, TEX.

I MAKE $40 A MONTH FIXING RADIOS IN SPARE TIME. I STARTED MAKING EXTRA MONEY 3 MONTHS AFTER BEGINNING THE N.R.I. COURSE AND MADE ABOUT $100 WHILE LEARNING.
WILLIAM CHERMAK
RT. 1, BOX 287
HOPKINS, MINN.

Here's the Formula That Has Worked For Hundreds

Mail the Coupon—I will send you my 64-page illustrated Book, RICH REWARDS IN RADIO—a real introduction to the wonders and opportunities of Radio!

You'll see how my thorough, practical methods offer *a tested way to more pay*, and a chance to get a steady job in a field with a bright future. It's not a "miracle cure" nor a "long chance" operation, but the same formula that worked for the men above, and hundreds of others, too. It is a time-tested way to make $5, $10 a week extra while training for a full time Radio job paying up to $50 a week.

Beginners Quickly Learn to Earn $5, $10 a Week EXTRA in Spare Time

Many N.R.I. students make $5, $10 a week EXTRA MONEY fixing Radios in spare time *while learning*. I send EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS that tell how to do it!

N.R.I. trains you "from the ground up"—covers fundamentals thoroughly. The combined efforts of more than 100 people have made the Course so *interesting*, with hundreds of pictures, charts, and diagrams—so *easy-to-grasp*, with special teaching methods—that we believe you will be "old friends" with Radio almost before you know it!

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Men likely to go into military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duties, MUCH HIGHER PAY. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. Hundreds of service men now enrolled.

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Today there's room nearly everywhere for more spare and full time Radio Technicians. Many Radio Technicians are starting their own businesses—making $30, $40, $50 a week! Others take good-pay jobs with Broadcasting Stations. Many more are needed for Government jobs as Civilian Radio Operators, Technicians, Radio manufacturers employ others to help fill Government wartime orders.

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I Trained These Men at Home *I Will Train You Too*

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National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

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City ..... State.....

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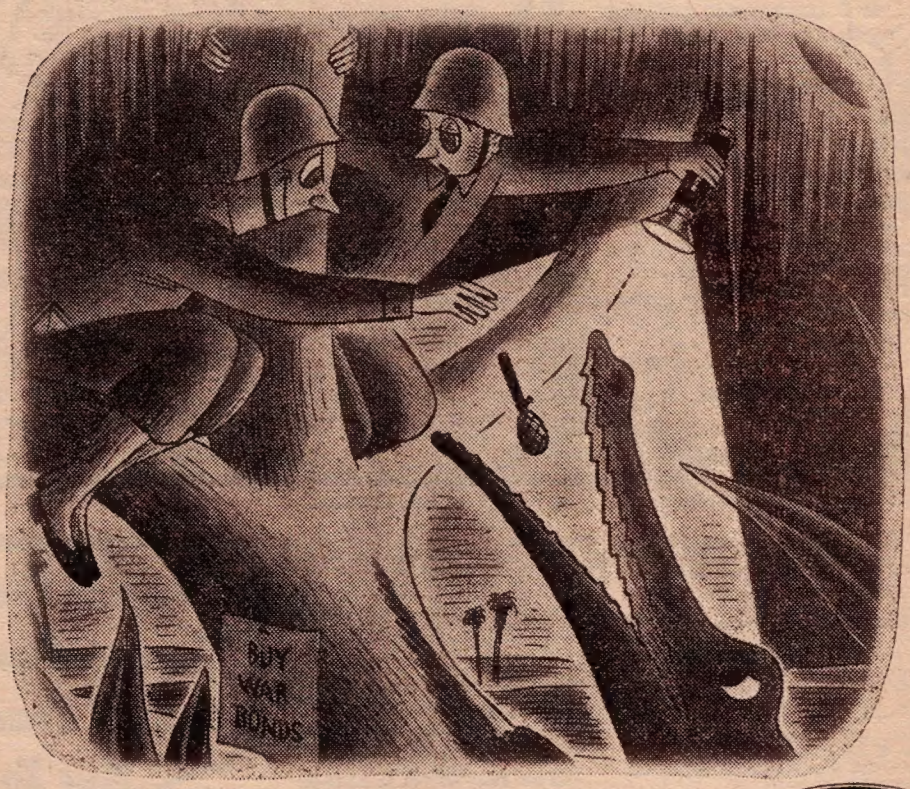

"Normally I'd consider this a dirty trick"

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REMEMBER—our fighting forces need "Eveready" flashlights and batteries and the materials they are made from. You can serve by conserving yours!

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APRIL ISSUE ON SALE MARCH 10TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 108, No. 5 for March, 1943 Best of New Stories

Palm-Oil Patriot (a novelette) . . . . . BRIAN O'BRIEN 10
They had nothing in common but their solitude—Leeds, the drunken trader and Hope, the missionary. Then came the night the drums began to talk through the Cameroons jungle and the two men learned that gin and psalms make a smooth and potent mixture in the face of danger.

Drop a Wrench on a Grunt's Head . . . . . BILL GULICK 32
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A Taste for Cod . . . . . B. B. FOWLER 40
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The Way of a Cossack . . . . . JOE ABRAMS 60
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Baton in His Knapsack . . . . . BEN T. YOUNG 69
Napoleon insisted every soldier carried one when he followed the Emperor's eagles. And Private Bill Stoakes saw no reason why there shouldn't be one tucked away in his own pack when he marched into battle in 1943.

Shanghai Post-Mortem (conclusion) . . . . . ERNEST O. HAUSER 72
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Cover painted for Adventure by R. E. Lougheed *Kenneth S. White, Editor*

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Subscription Dept., 205 East 42nd St., New York, N. Y. Trade Mark registered. Copyright, 1943, by Popular Publications, Inc. All rights reserved under Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U. S. A.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Everett Ruess, 27, cowboy artist and writer, formerly of Los Angeles, last seen in St. Petersburg, Fla., May 1935. Anyone having information of whereabouts please communicate with Burton Bowen, VAF 2, Bath, N. Y.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur Leo Messier, last seen about ten years ago in New York City and now believed in the West, please write Charles H. Hoffmann, c/o Veterans Hospital, Tucson, Ariz.

Any information concerning Doug Hayward, age 23, last residing in Chambersburg, Pa., will be most welcome and appreciated by Pvt. Peter Dunsky, c/o *Adventure.*

Any information as to the whereabouts of Elmer McMann, last heard of in Mt. Pleasant, Texas 16 years ago, will be appreciated by his son, Charles McMann, Box B, Florence, Ariz.

Would like to find my brothers Leslie and Allan Towns, last heard from in Winnipeg, Can. many years ago. Leslie is a World War veteran. If anyone knows their whereabouts, or their children, please inform W. J. Towns, Box 2460, Globe, Ariz.

Herbert A. Roig, known to be in California about 1929 and to be living in Houston, Tex. about 1939. Age 41, height 5-10, weight 150, gray eyes, light brown hair. Information about him will be appreciated by his friend Frank Landon, 1146 Webster St., San Francisco, Cal.

Wanted: information about W. D. (Will) Burnett, last heard from in Phoenix, Ariz. He is about six feet, weight 185 lbs. Tattoo on chest and one arm. Was in army 1919-20. Please write his friend C. B. Morgan; R. R. #2, Durant, Okla.

Don A. Ellis and I were buddies up till the time he enlisted in Coast Artillery about June 1939. Last heard from him in Aug. '41 when he was attending Bakers and Cooks School, Ft. Slocum, N. Y. a member of 5th C. A. If he, or anyone knowing his whereabouts, reads this, please write Pfc. Roy P. Whitton, c/o *Adventure.*

Robert Lee Johnson, 52, last heard of at Barron, Wis. in 1911. Prior to that had been at Leishman's Camp, Mile 48, A.C.R.R., had worked in railroad shops at Cape Girardeau, Mo. and on section at Barron, Wis. Later in Cal., Ariz., N. M. Talked of going to Alaska or South America. Anyone having knowledge of his whereabouts write P. O. Box 684, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Chas. Powell (Paul), supposed to be in or near Monroe, Fla., and last heard from in 1924 or '26, please communicate with Fred C. Powell, Box 1241, Reno, Nev.

Norman Rankin, 19, born in Glasgow, Scotland, resided in Brooklyn, N. Y., until 1934, last heard from at N. 3rd St., Philadelphia, Pa. Any information would be appreciated by Norman Bersin, 2/cl., U.S.N., c/o *Adventure.*

Anyone who knew William Henry Davis in Piedmont, Mo., in the years 1898-1900, please write to his son, Cecil G. Davis, 4522 Corliss St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Is General R. L. Hearn (Lo Sze Han), formerly Commander-in-Chief of Manchurian Irregulars of Chang Tso Lin alive? Who knows? Write Kaye Hyde, Box 1731, San Francisco, Cal.

Lewis Allen Hasty who left Coffeyville, Kan., seventeen years ago would like to hear from any member of his family. Write c/o Robert E. Mahaffey, Box 684, Oklahoma City, Okla.

(Continued on page 8)

How to Make YOUR Body Bring You FAME

... Instead of SHAME!

ARE YOU Skinny? Weak? Flabby?

Will You Let Me Prove I Can Make You a New Man?

I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs.! I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-ALIVE.

But later I discovered the secret that turned me into "the World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And now I'd like to prove to you that the same system can make a NEW MAN OF YOU!

What Dynamic Tension Will Do For You

I don't care how old or young you are or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice new, beautiful suit of muscle!

Only 15 Minutes A Day

No "ifs," "ands" or "maybes." Just tell me where you want handsome, powerful muscles. Are you fat and flabby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, pepless? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details about *"Dynamic Tension"* and learn how I can make you a healthy, confident, powerful HE-MAN.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely NATURAL method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actually fun. *"Dynamic Tension"* does the work.

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool with. When you have learned to develop your strength through *"Dynamic Tension,"* you can laugh at artificial muscle-makers. You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own body—watch it increase and multiply into real, solid LIVE MUSCLE.

My method—*"Dynamic Tension,"* —will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of *"Dynamic Tension"* almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

Charles Atlas

Holder of title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." As he looks today, from actual untouched snapshot.

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In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU! For a real thrill, send for this book today, AT ONCE. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 833, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

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115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

(Continued from page 6)

Would like very much to locate my brother, Thomas Merchant Ross, from whom I have not heard since 1926. He left home near Childress, Texas, and was last heard from a few days later in Red Bluff, California. In his letter he talked of going to Oregon. He would now be about 31 years old. He had a ruddy complexion, black hair and part of one front tooth missing. Anyone having met him or knowing his present whereabouts, please communicate with his brother, Private Allen R. Ross, care *Adventure*, or his sister, Mrs. Alice Ross Archer, 1709 Mentor Street, Dallas, Texas.

I would like to locate Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Franklin. Their last known whereabouts was in the Englewood district, close to Halsted St., Chicago, Ill., about ten years ago. They may have journeyed to Ontario—any information will be deeply appreciated by their old friends Mr. and Mrs. Bert Powell, 203 Buttrey St., Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.

Would like to get in touch with Dave Kelly Roberts. He was with the New Orleans *Daily States* in 1916-17. I think he went to Jacksonville, Fla. Write Harry Williams, 2029 Main St., Kansas City, Mo.

I would like to get in touch with Buck Rumkin, a young man in his twenties, last heard of in San Francisco, Calif., over two years ago. If this man, or anyone who knows of his whereabouts would write to his old friend on the MJ Ranch, it would be greatly appreciated. Bill Jewell, Foreman MJ Ranch, Buffalo Creek, British Columbia, Can.

Would like to hear from my brother, Charles W. Leach Lewis, generally called Charlie. He left Columbus, Ohio, in 1898 for Dallas, Texas. Had light hair, blue eyes; was painter, paper hanger and lather, also cook. Would be about 67 or 68 years old now. N. F. Leach Talbott, 916 Cleveland Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

Would like to contact any members of Battery C, 43rd Coast Artillery Corps from Camp Eustin, Va., from Jan. 1, 1921 to July 2, 1921. My father, Clifford V. St. Clair, was in that Battery, and I am hoping some of the members have seen him or know of his whereabouts. Please communicate with his son, whom he never saw, L. G. St. St. Clair, 2365 Sutter St., San Francisco, Cal.

Veteran William Daniel disappeared May, 1921, from the home of his parents, 4501-4th Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. Served as corporal, Battery D, 62nd Field Artillery; was honorably discharged Dec. 31, 1918, a private, 314 Cavalry, Camp Owen, Texas. Last seen in Los Angeles, 1921. Was a licensed radio operator, had been a jockey, and had made several trips to Central and South America, as a seaman. Anyone knowing his whereabouts, please communicate with Veterans Administration, Washington, D. C., giving reference number XC-2,985,049.

Would like to contact my cousin, Edwin F. Rowe, last heard of in Canton, Ohio, in 1912. At that time weighed 250 lbs., was working in a furnishing store as salesman, would be about 68 years old if living, probably in Ohio. C. Earl Drumm, County Home, Ebensburg, Pa.

Would like to get in touch with Preston Hurd who was formerly stationed at Albrook Field in the Canal Zone. Robert Owen, 103 Shultas Place, Hartford, Conn.

Would like to contact Hez or Robert Montgomery. Their mother, Mattie, in 1926 operated the Ivy Hotel, 30 North Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena. Also, Chum McComb who in 1917 was employed by A. B. Perkins & Co., wholesale produce, 3d & Water Sts., Bay City, Mich. Frank G. Batchelor, Room 312, 115 East 3d St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Would like to hear from members of the Northern Pacific Ry. civil engineer group with whom I served at Trout Creek, Montana, under A. C. Terril, during year 1908. Among them, Leigh Adkins, Henry Aldrich, Carl Bohland. Communicate with D. C. Corle, 600 Ninth Ave., Mount Dora, Fla.

Would like to hear from Eddie Conlon, who was in the infantry in Panama in 1939 and came back early in 1940. L. E. Hilliard, 45 Summer St., Manchester, Mass.

Edward R. Wilson, about 60, civil engineer, mining expert, ex-Ordnance officer. Last heard of, Prineville, Ore., spring of 1940. Word will be appreciated by Jack Horsfoll, Rock Creek Blvd., Nashville, Ore.

Armdie A. St. John, living in Haverhill, Mass., in the summer of 1913. Anyone knowing his whereabouts, kindly communicate with Arthur "Gene" Hicks, Middlesex St., Bradford, Mass., c/o Miss E. Hicks.

Today I'M the foreman!

–last week I was only a bench worker

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TO GET WAR WORK OUT
More Foremen than ever are needed to keep war production schedules at their peak.

FOREMEN WANTED!
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FOREMEN WANTED!
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War industries are in need of skilled and seasoned management. Foremen must be trained to fill good pay jobs at once.

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Ultimate Victory requires continuous, superior production of everything American fighting men need. If you're a qualified Foreman, you can help assure this. And after Victory—your ability and training will qualify you for the better jobs in industry. Can you do it? We'll show you proof that it has been done by many men. And what others have done you should be able to do.

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And So Can You!

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"During the five months I was studying your training, my salary more than doubled." O. S., Ohio

"When I enrolled, I was making approximately $40 a week. For the past three months, I have made $85 a week, so am entitled to your 100% Club button." C. N., Ind.

"Since enrolling, I have been appointed night foreman over nine inspectors and 12 machine operators." R. A., Ill.

"Since I enrolled, my salary has been raised 63 percent and I have been given new responsibilities." L. G., Montreal

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City ..... *State* .....

PALM-OIL PATRIOT

By

BRIAN O'BRIEN

TUK—tuk-tuk-tuk—boom-a-boom—tuk-tuk—boom-boom—tuk-tuk.

The dull thudding seemed to fill the narrow clearing carved in the mighty trees of the Cameroons jungle on the north bank of the Campo River.

Mr. Charles Leeds, palm oil trader, cocked his head to one side like a strange old bird, smoke coming in short puffs from his battered pipe. A Bulu native ducked out of a grass hut between Leeds and the river and two women stopped pounding yam to listen.

It was late afternoon, that calm halt in the African day when smoke from village fires lifts blue and solid into the dark canopy of lofty trees, when gray parrots swing across the silent river screaming like home-running children.

In half an hour the sky would be purple-black and spangled with yellow

The sub was in the middle of the channel, its crew on deck firing rifles in the air.

ILLUSTRATED
BY
I. B. HAZELTON

stars; the forest a mysterious black mass filled with a million points of green fire.

Mr. Leeds' pointed beard jutted truculently over a jerking Adam's apple as he mouthed the words of the drum talk. He was five feet two, bald and wrinkled as a vulture. He wore a heavy, yellow-centered white mustache beneath which he gripped a curved pipe between toothless jaws. Tattered shorts barely covered his gnarled knees and a bush shirt exposed a length of stringy throat below his torpedo beard. He slitted pale, sharp eyes as he listened to the distant call drum.

"Sala!"

"*N'tangan?*" The Bulu ran to him.

"Chop for two this night. Mission man comes."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

Thirty years of trading in Cameroons had given Mr. Leeds accurate understanding of the call drum talk; that strange, two-toned, almost articulate

code system whereby the natives relay news and messages over thousands of miles of jungle.

"He walks without sound," the drum said. That was the *n'dan* or drum name the Bulus had given Mr. Leeds years before when he was young enough to slide through any thicket without alarming game. Then: "If a woman he would be beautiful." That *n'dan* was embarrassing to Hope, the American missionary from Kribi, since it referred to his corpulence, a sign of female beauty in the jungle.

"I feel hunger not small." That was surely enough hint that the visitor expected dinner.

Thus the signal drums told their messages. First, the name of the person to whom the message was addressed; then the *n'dan* of him who sent it; and at last, the code indicating the message itself.

So Mr. Leeds hopped into his bark and palm leaf hut yelling for Sala to come and tidy up.

He liked Hope, even if he was an American. He was a good man as missionaries go, fair with the natives and all that. But he was too blooming critical of Mr. Leeds' way of living. Mr. Leeds loved his tot of gin—not too much—couple of dollops in the morning and not a drop until sundown, then maybe six or seven before bed. Hope didn't smoke or drink and he deplored Mr. Leeds' profane and sulphurous tongue.

"Ye're welcome 'round 'ere," Leeds had told him years ago, "as long as yer don't do no psalm singin' and that 'Come ter Jesus' stuff."

And between the two there had persisted for many years a strange, acrimonious friendship.

DARKNESS fell and Mr. Leeds watched Sala put out two battered deck chairs with packing case on which stood a gin bottle, a glass and a kerosene lantern. The forest behind him was filled with the chirp of cicadas and the harsh croak of frogs. The river was quiet and empty against the background of somber trees.

Then there was a soft chant and the *thuck* of paddles. A torch reflected itself against the trees and a canoe slid into the river bank. A fat, tall man in sweat-stained shirt and slacks strode towards Mr. Leeds, eye glasses glimmering in the lamplight.

"Ah, Charlie. Glad to see you," he called.

Mr. Leeds took a deliberate sip of gin before shaking hands.

"Well, 'ere we are ag'in," he greeted, although he had not seen Hope for over six months. "Sit down! Sala! Bawth for the *n'tangan*. 'Ow's the river?"

"Not bad. Villages are quiet. No oil, of course, but plenty of food. Two elephants killed at Akouakim. The herd is coming down this way."

"Good. 'Ow long you stayin'?"

"Off in the morning. Got to get back to Kribi; been away over a month inspecting the outlying stations. Had a boat load of survivors in just before I left Kribi."

"Yus, 'eard it over the drums. Torpedoed, wasn't they?"

"Yes. The *Abo*."

"Dirty bahstids! And no apologies," said Mr. Leeds.

"Ahem. Thank you."

"Welcome. 'Ow many killed?"

"Ten lost when the vessel was sunk, somewhere sou'west of San Thomé. Five died in the boat, leaving eleven. They're in the mission hospital."

"They makes me sick," exploded Mr. Leeds. "Cawn't they do nothink to stop them damn U-boats? They've got seven or eight ships in these waters."

"I know—"

"What's the use o' talkin'? I offers me services soon as war broke out. What 'appens? They laughs in me face. Went all the way to Calabar, I did, in a branch boat. I'm too old, they sez. Too old! I'm sixty-one, thet's all. I bin everywhere, I 'ave! Mined silver in Mexico. Built railroads acrost your bleedin' United States. Worked in the 'Udson Chewbs, I did. Too old! Why, I could walk 'round that 'Itler like a cooper 'round a bleedin' cawsk."

"I know," said Hope. "But there are things you *could* do."

"Such as wot?" demanded Mr. Leeds suspiciously.

"Well, you could come to Kribi and give us a hand—"

"There. I knew ye'd say that," Mr. Leeds yelled. "I won't do it, I tell yer. Told yer before. I got me beliefs, I 'ave, but they're me own business. I ain't comin' 'round yer old mission. I'm a Britisher, I am, an' if they don't want me, I'll stop 'ere."

"But there's no trade here. What will you do?"

"Listen, 'Ope." Mr. Leeds placed a bony finger beside his bulbous nose. "I got plans, I 'ave. I got ten ton o' prime oil in me sheds. There's no ships to take it, 'count o' the blockade. So I cawn't sell it. All me trade's tied up in that oil. So I gotta starve? Not by a damn sight! And no apologies. I'll hold that oil 'til there *is* a market.

"I'm goin' elephant 'untin' I am, 'cross the river, there, in Spanish Muni. No laws, no licenses, no patrols. I'll sell the meat for oil and me food and I'll keep the ivory. 'Ave a forchun, I will, by the end of the war."

"Charlie," Hope said, leaning forward in his chair, "you're all alone. You need something besides yourself to think of. I wish you'd come back to Kribi with me. Across the river is enemy country you know; the Spaniards have too many Germans over there. You're not safe here."

"Garn! I bin alone all me life," said Mr. Leeds defiantly. "I bin a sailor, chainman, engineer—got books to prove it—I've traded all through this bush, and all alone. I don't need no one—"

He slapped one hand on his hip glaring defiantly.

"You're a fine fellow," said Hope.

"None of yer soft soap," mumbled Mr. Leeds, reddening. "I like you, too, see, a bit. But that don't mean I gotta do what you sez. You mind yer business and I'll mind mine. Now go get yer bawth an' we'll 'ave some tommy."

"Ye're welcome 'round 'ere as long as yer don't do no psalm-singin'."

MR. LEEDS had knocked over a bush fowl that morning. And that with some sweet potatoes and a green mess which Sala declared was "spinneg" made a fair meal. Coconut pudding made of grated nut and cane syrup finished the repast. Mr. Leeds had a sweet tooth.

They sat in the darkness afterwards; mosquitoes forbade the lantern. Leeds' pipe poisoned the cooling air. In the compound a watchman squatted over a

"I'd go 'round them subs like a cooper 'round a bleedin' cawsk," declared Mr. Leeds.

dying fire twanging a mouth harp from which came minor liquid tinklings.

"Kinda peaceful," began Mr. Leeds. "Reminds me o' the first time I come up this river. Explored every creek and beach in the district, I did. I built this place. Did ye know that? The Bulus don't like their towns alongside the river, so I 'ad 'em make this house and compound nearby. I'm their king, sorta, now. Ain't a soul across there"—jerking his pipestem towards the Spanish bank of the river—"fer fifty mile. That's why I know I'm safe 'ere—" He peered at Hope. "What ya starin' at?"

"Nothing. I'm wondering about those poor souls in the hospital."

"Oh. Well, as I was sayin'—"

"I wonder how those U-boats can operate so far from their bases."

"If them fat'eads would give me a boat an' a gun I'd go 'round them subs like a cooper 'round a cawsk," declared Mr. Leeds. "I bin a sailor, I 'ave, I know 'em. I'd never let 'em outside Kiel Canal, I wouldn't. Or if they did get out, I'd cop 'em when they tried to git in ag'in."

"I don't know—"

"They gotta go 'ome fer oil fer their Diesels, ain't they?"

"I don't know about that, either. Those things can run on anything. They're running Diesel locomotives in Dakar on peanut oil."

"Then I'd cop 'em off Dakar."

"Not so easy as that."

"Well, t'ain't my business any'ow. They don't want me to 'elp 'em, so I ain't botherin' me 'ead about it."

"I'm turning in," said Hope shortly. "Good-night."

Mr. Leeds grunted and reached for the gin.

What was in Hope's hair, he wondered. He was usually a bit more matey—after eating a man's food and all. He felt injured.

"Wake up, there," he shouted to the dozing watchman. Then he went grumpily to bed.

"When yer coming this way ag'in?" he asked Hope next morning, as they ate fried yams and eggs.

"Don't know. I might not have another chance until the war is over," said the missionary. "Too much to do at Kribi."

"'Ave it yer own way," said Mr. Leeds airily.

He wasn't going to let Hope know he cared. But the river would be a bit lonely-like without Hope to have a bit of a chin with every six months or so.

The missionary finished his meal and called his carriers from their hut. He paid them off and they ran to their canoe calling musical good-byes as they paddled up-river.

"Sala, get me three boys from the village," Hope ordered.

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"How are you fixed for food?" Hope asked.

"I'll be all right."

Leeds lit his pipe with elaborate unconcern.

"Plenty of sugar?" Hope asked.

"Usin' cane syrup when I can get it."

"I'll send you some sugar."

"Ain't got no money."

"You can send me some of that ele-

phant meat you are going to kill."

"Righto!" Mr. Leeds grinned. "I'd like some tea, then, an' sugar an' some flour. Oh yus, an' some spirits, in case o' snakebite."

"No spirits," said Hope firmly.

Mr. Leeds kept silent, wondering how long his stock of two and a half cases would last.

There came the thudding of a signal drum in the village.

"The elephant walks in the forest, come quick, come quick," translated Hope. "You might have a shot before long."

"So you ain't comin' back 'til arter the war?" Leeds felt a bit dismal.

"Don't see how I can. We're shorthanded at Kribi. All our younger men are gone. There's the telegraph man and the radio engineer. But only my wife and myself in the mission. Our natives are useful, of course, but I need someone to keep an eye along the border here. I wish you'd help, if you've made up your mind to stay."

"What can I do?"

"You might let one of my deacons stay in the village—"

"Not bloody likely. And no apologies," snapped Mr. Leeds. "Your bloomin' deacons mess abaht with the gals and scare their pas to death. I won't 'ave it. My people are 'eathens an' they like it. You leave 'em alone."

"All right," Hope sighed; they had had that argument before. "You can at least keep me posted with news though."

"O.K., I'll do that."

"Will you send me a report each month?"

"Righto."

"Thanks. And in case of emergency you can send a drum talk message. You understand it and so do I. I guess we're the only whites who do. If they need me urgently I'll come. If you—get sick—or anything—send drum talk and I'll come at once."

"'Ell! There's nothin' wrong with me." Leeds blew his nose loudly. "'Ealthy as a two year old, I am. I don't get sick."

"Those elephants might get you—"

"Them things! I'll go 'round them like a cooper 'round a cawsk!"

"All right. I'll see you some day and we'll celebrate."

"Righto," said Mr. Leeds, shaking hands. "Don't fergit that sugar an' stuff."

"I'll send it back with your carriers."

"Thenks. So long."

They walked along the fifty yard trail from Mr. Leeds' compound to the village where the Bulus under their chief waited to greet Hope.

"*M'bolo, n'tangan. M'bolani, m'bolani,*" came their soft voices.

Hope greeted them kindly, marching briskly after his three boys.

Mr. Leeds wondered, watching the fat man striding through the narrow trail. He would march like that for four days, sleeping in a native hut, eating what the Bulus gave him, and offering them in return advice and help in sickness. Mr. Leeds asked himself what made white men trek for hundreds of miles through dense dripping forest, spending their whole lives in persuading natives to change their age-old gods and teaching them trades they would never use.

He could find no answer.

CHAPTER II

BLACK GOLD

HIS small compound seemed empty. A few natives swept the red earth clear of ashes. The river stretched to the far bank three hundred yards away, dark green and still as glass in the morning sunshine.

He called Sala and unlocked the shed where he kept his oil. Inside it a double row of fat puncheons stood, whitewashed and redolent of spicy, orange oil. There were ninety-five of them.

He certainly was foolish to get caught with all that oil. Worth darn near three hundred pound, it was, and more, in trade.

He went out carefully padlocking the door behind him.

"I'll 'old," he told himself dramatically, "fer a good mawkit."

And because he felt old and lonely suddenly, he went to his hut and took a good dollop of gin.

Feeling better he took down his rifle, an ancient Westley-Richards .600 drop-block. In good condition, it was, too, though it kicked his bony shoulder like a mule.

"Sala!" he called.

"*N'tangan.*" The stocky native, muscular body covered with tufts of hair, stood, eyes gleaming at sight of the rifle.

"Where do the elephants walk?"

"The rains finish, *n'tangan.* The elephants walk close to the river."

"Find out where they is."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

Mr. Leeds whistled through toothless gums as he bent over his rifle, cleaning and polishing carefully.

Late that night Sala came with news that a great herd of elephant were twenty miles east following the river bank on the south side.

"Ought ter be opposite 'ere in abaht a week," Mr. Leeds decided.

He spent that week pottering about his compound. There was little to do since trade was dead. He looked over his pitifully small stock of trade goods. A few cans of kerosene, some mildewed bolts of cotton print, trade salmon, salt, a few brass rods. His trade tobacco had gone months before and he sniffed critically at some native tobacco strung up to dry. Cardboard boxes of sleazy shirts liberated several enormous cockroaches from which Mr. Leeds retreated, cursing angrily.

The village of Ekin, near which he had built his hut, was his responsibility, he felt. But they had plenty of yams, palm oil enough for food and cooking and cassava patches that yielded enough farina to keep all the babies pot-bellied. There was fish in the river and Mr. Leeds would keep them supplied with meat. He could carry on without trade for a while.

Then one morning Sala ran to report a herd of elephant feeding in an abandoned cane patch about five miles across the river.

"Get out a light canoe and we'll git arter 'em."

Carefully counting his cartridges he stowed four in his shirt pockets and hefted the heavy rifle. Sala flirted a great spear-bladed paddle across the placid current and carefully tethered the dugout to a tree, for there were no canoes on the south bank.

Sala led the way through an overgrown trail which they had used before. Mr. Leeds stepped nimbly for all his age, hopping over trailing vines, skirting rotten logs dainty as a cat.

Once a buck and three does plunged across a clearing but Mr. Leeds watched them go, much to Sala's disappointment. Meat was meat to the Bulu.

They were crossing a small stream when Sala stopped, bullet head cocked to one side.

There was a faint report, then another.

"Guns," muttered Mr. Leeds. "Where the 'ell's that comin' from?"

The slap of rifle-fire came from far away to the west, somewhere near the coast, Mr. Leeds figured. He hoped it would not frighten the elephants.

Two or three times they heard shots. Sala turned a puzzled face. "No man lives in that bush," he said. "Perchance it is devils."

"No devils live here," Mr. Leeds reassured him. "Devils fear guns. Maybe it is something else that talks like a gun."

But he was mystified just the same.

A few minutes later Sala froze like a bronze statue. Mr. Leeds crept close. There was a hollow rumbling somewhere close by. "*N'gok,*" whispered Sala.

"Cast to the east."

SALA slipped off like a shadow and Mr. Leeds crept on. He stopped to examine great oval impressions in the soft clay. Some still contained water. There were torn branches and half-chewed leaves, and here and there a bush pressed flat.

Mr. Leeds slid a bright cartridge into his rifle, arranged the sling about his left arm and moved forward, beard stuck out like a ram, sharp eyes slitted under withered lids. He faded behind a tree at movement from his left.

Sala appeared, pointing.

From ahead came a squeal and sudden movement. Sala dropped and Mr. Leeds ducked low. That meant there were calves in the herd and that a cow was uneasy.

For half an hour they crouched listening to slow movement and an occasional ripping crash as a branch was torn from its tree.

There was sunshine through the tangled jungle ahead. Mr. Leeds made for two great mahogany trees and peered between them into a wide clearing.

There was a depression filled with shoulder-high bushes. In it was the largest herd of elephants he had ever seen. Must be over a hundred and fifty, he estimated. Some stood in the shade across the valley. Others moved slowly, heads swinging, trunks feeling for juicy leaves. Now and then a bush would shake in the middle and a tiny, bristly trunk would stick up. Then the slim tusked cows would move slowly to their calves.

Mr. Leeds stood like a statue examining them for a good tusker. Sala lay flat, one hand gripping a scarp of fur; his fetish against all harm. Then he rose and his arm slowly lifted, pointing.

In deep shadow across the clearing Mr. Leeds made out a tremendous shape. Like a great rock it was until he saw the magnificent curve of mighty tusks; the master of the herd, by the look of him. He leaned against a teak, ears flopping like curtains in a light wind, a branch of green in his trunk. His tusks reached almost to the ground.

Mr. Leeds lifted his rifle, cuddled his scrubby cheek against the polished stock and squinted over the sights. He waited for that enormous ear to swing forward, then sighted on a fold just behind the shoulder blade. . . .

There was a mighty report in the silence and Mr. Leeds staggered back, shoulder tingling. Trumpeting elephants crashed through the bushes in all directions. Screaming calves butted like pigs while their mothers slung them ahead of them, surging like battleships through the shattered bushes.

In a second the glade was empty but for the great bull still leaning against his tree but with a pulsing stream of brilliant blood pumping out of his side. The crashes of retreating beasts suddenly stopped as, their panic abated, they pressed on silently into the depths of the jungle.

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Suddenly his trunk went up, he wheeled with frightful quickness and charged through the bushes, tusks lifted like swords.

Mr. Leeds stood still as death while the great stricken animal slowly moved his head, wicked little eyes searching the glade.

Suddenly his trunk went up and he wheeled with frightful quickness, his trunk stuck out like a boom and his ears spread wide. He screamed like ten thousand pigs and charged through the bushes with tusks lifted like swords.

Mr. Leeds flipped out the spent cartridge and replaced it, then sent a bullet smashing right into the little open mouth of the monster. He reared like a horse and dropped, kicked a few times and with a deep, grunting moan died.

"Blime!" gasped Mr. Leeds, mopping his wrinkled brow with a dirty handkerchief. "I got 'im."

In the middle of the depression the great bull lay like a huge gray rock, one tusk curving up and one bent foreleg looking like a mighty dead branch.

Sala jumped from behind the tree sweeping a cutlass from his belt and leaped upon the dead beast, hacking gleefully at the tough hide.

Mr. Leeds started to walk down to his kill but his legs trembled so much that he had to sit down until he could get at his waterbottle.

"Must be a hundred an' fifty pahnds of ivory," he muttered, taking a heartening pull of gin. "Come orf it," he ordered Sala. "Go back to Ekin and bring people to take the beef. Chop out the ivories too. I'm tired."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*" Reluctantly Sala climbed down and trotted along the back trail.

"Like a bloomin' bus fallin' over," Mr. Leeds told himself.

Then he took another pull at the gin, tilted his helmet over his eyes and went to sleep.

He was awakened by loud yells as the villagers poured into the hollow.

"*E kél*" they gasped at the size of the bull. "Beef! Beef!" And dashed, cutlasses, axes and spears lifted, at the massive carcass.

Under Sala's glittering eye some chopped carefully about the tusk, working at it until Sala was able to draw the blood-stained ivory from its conical core. Already piles of steaming meat pressed down the bushes. The Bulus, blood from head to feet, chewed lumps of raw flesh as they crawled inside the rib case tearing out the entrails. Women, too, appeared to load the meat into baskets which they bore triumphantly away, chanting a song of praise at their *n'tangan.*

IT WAS getting dark before they were near the end. Sala had managed to get the second tusk loose and was toasting a bit of meat over a fire. Mr. Leeds munched it, grunting contentedly.

Suddenly there was a silence.

Mr. Leeds peered across the darkening hollow. Opposite him were two white men.

"Spanish government men," he gasped. He'd be caught for hunting elephant without a license.

He sat still examining them. One was tall, dressed in dirty white shirt and shorts. The other, stocky-built in khaki shirt and helmet. Both carried rifles.

"Blast," whispered Mr. Leeds. He mighta known whites were about when he heard the firing that morning. He stood up.

The two stared, talked for a moment, then descended the hollow and walked over.

"Didn't know there was any white men abaht 'ere," said Mr. Leeds.

"We heard you shooting," said the tall one. "You do not belong in Spanish territory."

"I ain't doin' no 'arm," Mr. Leeds protested. "Just 'untin' a bit of ivory—" He eyed them closely. "Leeds, my name is, Charlie Leeds, oil trader. I bin tradin' this river fer years. You don't look like Spaniards."

"We are not," said the tall one again. "My name is Jenkins. This is Mr. Malloy. We are Americans."

"Oh. Blime! I thought you was government agents."

"No," smiled Jenkins. "Just—oil traders like yourself."

"Long way from 'ome, ain't yer?" Mr. Leeds suggested.

"We have come from Rio Bata, down the coast. We have established a factory near the river mouth."

Mr. Leeds guffawed.

"Fat 'opes, you got. I got all the trade up this 'ere river, and there ain't no trade. No oil, no ships to take it. I got ten ton o' prime oil in me sheds right now and no mawkit fer it. So if yer come lookin' fer trade you come to the wrong shop. See?"

The men glanced at each other.

"You have ten tons of oil?"

"Yus."

"Near here?"

"Five mile away on the river."

"What do you want for it?"

" 'Ere, wait a minute. Mean ter say you wanta buy it?"

"Yes, if the price is good. We have a market. Spain is neutral, you know. Our ships can get through."

"I se-e-e." Mr. Leeds eyed them closely. "Wot yer payin'?"

"Six cents, American, a pound."

"'Old on." Mr. Leeds tried to figure this out. Six cents was a good price in the best times. "I'll take seven cents," he said.

"Sold," snapped Malloy.

"Cash?"

"Cash."

"Right you are, guv'nor. Foller me and I'll show it yer."

It was pitch dark now and the last natives were carrying the tusks away. The three whites followed flaring torches.

Inside an hour they were crossing the river to Mr. Leeds' compound which was crowded with hilarious natives dancing madly about great fires over which massive hunks of elephant meat were cooking.

"'OW LONG yer bin in Bata?" asked Mr. Leeds as they entered his hut. They both looked mighty pasty to him; not like men who had spent much time in the tropics.

"Came out only a few weeks ago," said Jenkins.

"I didn't know there was any natives on the Spanish side o' the river."

"We brought some with us," Malloy said. "I say, what kind of tobacco is that?" He was sniffing hungrily.

"Try it," Mr. Leeds offered.

Malloy snatched his pouch and stuffed a briar pipe, grabbed a match and puffed luxuriously.

"Blime, looks as if you was 'ungry fer a smoke."

"I was. Left my tobacco behind this morning."

"Well, you ain't brought nothin' with yer. Yer'll 'ave to make out with mats ter sleep on tonight."

"That is fine. Thanks."

They accepted tots of gin and ate heartily, looking about them curiously as villagers came and went in the compound.

"What's the war news?" Mr. Leeds asked.

"Don't know. Haven't heard for some time," Jenkins said.

"Must be a lot o' Germans in Bata, I 'eard."

"A few, but we weren't there long enough to have anything to do with them."

Malloy smoked in silence for a while.

"Any more whites in this district?" he asked.

"Nah. There was a missionary here a week ago. American too, name o' 'Ope. Nah, I'm the only white inside four days' trek."

"So." Jenkins glanced at Malloy. "Well, we are tired. If we may go to bed—"

"Sure. In there." Mr. Leeds jerked his head towards the hut. "'Appy dreams. See yer in the mornin'."

They stood up, lifted their rifles and went into the hut.

Mr. Leeds sat a while drinking and smoking. He could hear them talking softly through the bark wall. He couldn't make out what they said, but soon all was quiet.

Finding himself dozing off he too went inside.

"What do you want?"

He halted at the sight of Malloy standing in the doorway.

"Wot's the idea?" he demanded. "And why the gun, h'if I may be so bold?"

"Where are you going?"

"Jumpy, ain't yer," Mr. Leeds snorted. "Goin' ter bed, I am. What's the idea of the sentry-go?"

"Oh, I couldn't sleep. You startled me. Sorry."

Mr. Leeds grunted and turned in. Mighty strange behavior for a guest, he decided, just before dropping off.

CHAPTER III

YANKEE DOLLARS

AT DAWN he awakened. The Americans were already up, standing on the river bank looking at the canoes.

"Wot 'o," called Mr. Leeds. "Come an' have a tiddley."

They refused.

"Where is the oil?" asked Jenkins.

"'Ere you are." Mr. Leeds unlocked the shed. "Ninety-five puncheons, there.

I bin tradin' this river fer years. And I got all the Bulus eatin' outa me 'and. If yer wants to trade in these parts yer gotta trade with me."

"Yes, we have been talking of that. If you can control all trade on the river, perhaps you will be our agent, and we will buy all the palm oil you can get."

"Right you are," agreed Mr. Leeds. "You pay me price an' I'll get the oil."

"Good. You can deliver?"

"Where?"

"At a place I will show you down the river."

"If it ain't too far."

"If you will take us down I'll show you."

"Righto."

They ate breakfast and Mr. Leeds called for paddlers.

A light dugout carried them swiftly for six miles downstream to where the river opened to a wide lagoon just inside the coast line. At a sign from Jenkins the canoe veered left and entered a narrow creek.

"In to the bank."

The craft nosed in to a narrow path on the right bank. Mr. Leeds watched the two men get out and started after them.

"Thank you, Mr. Leeds," said Jenkins, shaking his hand. "If you will start delivery right away we shall be pleased."

"Oh, righto," said Mr. Leeds, getting back in the canoe. "Yer wants the oil 'ere?"

"That is right. Good-day."

"I'll 'ave a load 'ere by noon."

"Splendid. Good-bye."

They watched the canoe back out of the creek.

"I don't remember that creek," Mr. Leeds mumbled as they pitched a little in the open lagoon. It was part of a network of deep, narrow waterways that made a sort of delta at the river mouth. He took careful bearings as the canoe nosed into the main stream.

Returning to his compound he lost no time in loading his two largest dugouts with eight puncheons of oil. And perching himself in the bow of the leading canoe, he hugged himself as they swept down the placid stream.

"Blime! Wot a cop!" he muttered. "Beats elephant 'untin' 'ollow."

He could trade just as if there was no war, open the river again and make better profit than at peace-time.

They were swinging across the lagoon when there was a whip-like crack.

" 'Untin' ag'in."

And when the canoes turned into the narrow creek he saw Malloy waiting on the bank.

"Well, 'ere's the oil," called Mr. Leeds. "Where d'yer want it?"

"Unload it here."

"Righto. Where's yer fact'ry?"

"Not far. Just unload here and my men will take it over."

"Right you are."

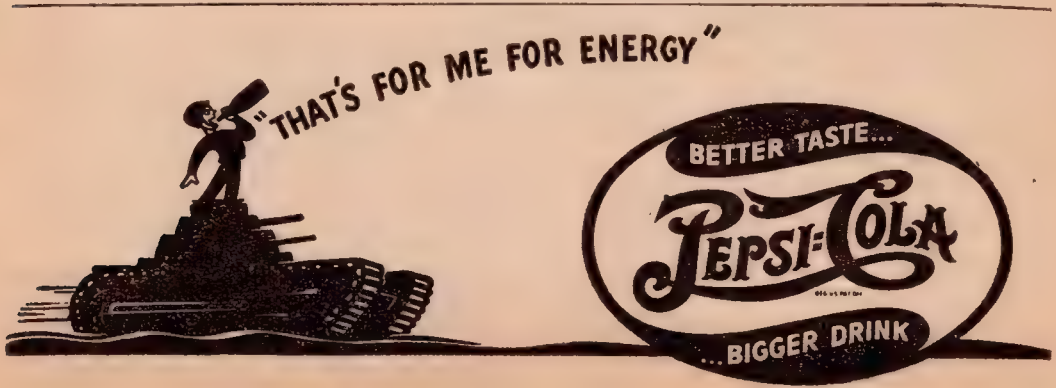
By means of ropes snubbed to trees the massive puncheons were worked up the bank and stacked in a row beside the path.

"Where's yer men?" Mr. Leeds asked. "You'll 'ave to clear this pawth."

"They're busy at the factory," Malloy told him. "Just leave the oil here."

"Be back before dark," Mr. Leeds said as the canoes pulled away.

Malloy waved a hand.



LATE that afternoon Mr. Leeds delivered two more canoe loads. This time Jenkins was at the path. It was widened and the puncheons delivered that morning were gone.

Four days later the last of the oil was unloaded.

"There yer are," Mr. Leeds chirped. "Ten ton o' prime oil."

"And here is your money."

Jenkins counted out American bills, crisp and new.

"One thousand, seven hundred dollars."

"Thenks." Mr. Leeds tucked the money in his shirt pocket. "Well, wot abaht a tiddley to celebrate?"

"I'm afraid we have no drink," Jenkins said. "We are very busy just now. You will excuse us, I know."

"Righto. Just as yer likes." Mr. Leeds was disappointed.

"Now, when can you have some more oil ready?" Malloy said heartily.

"I can get yer four or five ton in a month."

"Good. We will call on you then in a month."

"Righto."

Mr. Leeds shook hands with them and boarded his canoe. Mighty queer sorta traders, he decided on the trip up-river. Most oil men were glad of a bit of a jollification after a deal. He wondered where their factory was and how they'd get their oil shipped to Bata. Now he came to think of it they weren't much like Americans he'd known before; more formal, like. And they spoke differently from Hope, the missionary. Maybe they came from a different part of the States.

None of his business, he decided as he went to bed that night. As long as they paid for his oil that's all he was worrying about.

Next day he sat down to write a report to Hope at Kribi.

"Send me some more salt, trade tobacco, cotton goods, cutlasses and brass rods," he commanded. "Did some business with some of your countrymen, so I can pay me way in Yankee dollars."

That would give Hope something to think about, he grinned, carefully burying the bills in a cigarette can.

He busied himself that day sending off headloads of smoked elephant meat to Hope. More he sent up-river as presents to chiefs.

"Make drum talk," he ordered Sala. "Tell them I will trade again for good, cooked oil delivered here."

"Aye, *n'tangan*."

But he was curious about the American factory. He wondered how, delicate-like, he could manage to have a look at it. After all, he told himself, they were sort of competitors; he ought to see what they'd got.

Late that afternoon he heard rifle-fire from the general direction of the creeks and that gave him an idea.

So before dark he took a canoe up-river and lurked close to a sandspit where antelope came down to water. He had not long to wait before a good-sized harness antelope placed dainty hooves in the water and bent its head to drink. Mr. Leeds took a careful bead and sent a bullet through its heart.

Next morning he had the carcass loaded in a dugout and calling Sala started down-river. Reaching the path he got out, fastened the canoe and loaded the buck on Sala's broad shoulders.

They walked into the widened path down which the puncheons had been rolled.

"Blime! That's funny." Mr. Leeds stared at the red clay of the path.

It was scarred with the tracks of booted feet. Had Jenkins and Malloy moved all that oil by themselves? Impossible. Yet no natives wore shoes as far as he knew. Maybe they'd imported savvy natives from Bata.

But it didn't make sense.

About two hundred yards from the river Sala halted, listening. There was a soft, thumping sound, regular as a heartbeat. Mr. Leeds sniffed. There was a spicy scent of palm oil cooking.

"Stay here," he ordered Sala and walked ahead.

The path dipped a little and he made out the sheen of water through trees to his right. Then he heard voices, many voices.

Something told him to step off the

path and he crept like an Indian between the trail and the creek bank. The pumping grew louder and whiffs of smoke came to him. He crawled around the buttressed roots of a wide cottonwood tree and peered through a tangle of vines.

THERE was a clearing along the bank of a deep, silent creek. The undergrowth had been cut away beneath enormous teaks. There were canvas shelters and white men moving about them.

A great tank was placed on a frame over a fire fed by two men in shorts and singlets. Malloy sat in a camp chair watching them. They were cooking oil ladled from puncheons by other whites and from the tank a wide hose went to something covered with palm branches that floated in the creek.

Mr. Leeds ducked back like a turtle.

It was a submarine made fast to trees! Long, mudstained, with the palm branches slung from its clearing wires and covering it from the air.

A man crouched on the deck watching the oil hose and above him on the conning tower Mr. Leeds made out a U, a hooked cross and the red-painted figure of a mermaid.

He flattened in the wet undergrowth holding his breath.

A U-boat right in *his* river, feeding on *his* oil. They were heating it so it would flow easily into the sub's tanks. And those whites were the crew. Nazis, refueling ready to go out and murder more ships and sailors. The guns were shooting meat for them and they planned to use that creek as a resting place between cruises.

"Bahstids!" he whispered, backing away from the clearing. He thought of rushing back for his rifle. But there were about twenty-five Nazis there, and they'd get him in a second. He had to get that sub once and for all.

His heart thumped like that pump as he reached the path and raced along it fast as his old legs would go.

"Come." He grabbed Sala, dragging him towards the canoe.

"*N'tangan*—"

"Shut up."

Shoving Sala into the dugout Mr. Leeds grabbed a paddle and they surged upstream to the compound.

The old man pondered as he dug the paddle deep. That sub would leave as soon as the oil was loaded. It had to be stopped! It had to be stopped! But how?

"Listen, Sala," he panted as they pulled in to the bank. "You must make drum talk to the mission man. Tell him that enemies are here. They have a ship that goes underwater and the people from Duala must send a ship that flies to kill our enemies."

Sala's eyes grew round as bloodshot marbles.

"*N'tangan* is sick," he declared positively.

"I'll break yer stoopid 'ead," Mr. Leeds roared.

Then he changed his tone, talking slowly and carefully in Bulu.

"Hear me." His beard jutted like a horn. "Hear me. You will say those things many times until the mission man answers."

"But the drum talk has no word for ships that swim under water and ships that fly in the heavens," Sala objected. "The drummers in other towns will not understand. They will not pass on the talk to Kribi."

"Jeezes!" spat Mr. Leeds fiercely. "Git outa here."

He sat gnawing his mustache, reached automatically for the gin bottle. Then he shoved it away.

"Clear 'ead wanted for this," he told himself.

Sala was right. The drum talk was in code—groups of words that had simple meanings covering ordinary happenings like birth, death, dances and the coming of visitors. He must find a way to send a message that would be understood by all the villages between here and Kribi and yet be understood by Hope. He called Sala again.

"This is a bad palaver," he told him.

"Aye."

"What is the drum name for the German white men; they who ruled this land in the far-away time?"

"*A woé bôt élàn.*"

"He who kills for spite." Leeds rub-

bed his hands. "Good. Now how do you say 'Come to hunt'?"

"*Okpen o nto ngàta né doé, doé, doé.*"

"The little antelope is tied up tight, tight, tight," translated Mr. Leeds. "You will say, 'The big fish is tied up tight, tight, tight.' Savvy?"

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"You will say, 'The big bird flies.' Then, '*Za avo, za avo, za avo.*'"

"Come quick, come quick, come quick," repeated Sala.

"All these things you will make the drum say. First the drum name of the mission man, to make him know he must act. Then you will say my own name. Thus he will know that I send the message. The German name will tell him that Germans are here. Thus he will send the big bird to search the creeks where only a big fish may hide. You will make this talk three times. Then at night again three times until the mission man replies."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*" Sala's eyes were strange.

"Hear, man," Mr. Leeds barked sharply. "I am not sick in my head. This is a bad palaver. Germans will come to kill all here if you do not send the talk as I have said. Savvy? Savvy?"

"Aye, *n'tangan.* I savvy."

CHAPTER IV

DRUM TALK

IT WAS high noon, that part of the day when the forest sleeps. The great trees are motionless at this time. Africa is filled with a boding silence, for all the animals sleep and only butterflies dance in the sunlight.

Mr. Leeds watched Sala roll out the big call drum. Stooping he picked out two palm frond clubs and with them commenced a carefully spaced, delicately varied beating. Mr. Leeds listened to the hollow, irregular booming. He could make out the two-toned vowel talk of the Bulus. It was as though a mighty voice talked in a tunnel so that one was aware of words but no accurate pronunciation.

Once during a pause there was a faint reply from the north. Sala listened intently and banged out some short phrases.

"The town of Ambam asks what kind of talk is this?" he explained. "I tell them to pass on the talk for it is medicine against a bad magic."

"Good," Mr. Leeds approved. "Do it again."

Sala thumped until he was streaked with sweat, then leaned over the hollow cylinder, exhausted.

"Listen, Sala," Mr. Leeds said suddenly, looking past him. "Do not look behind you, but do as I say. Evil comes. Make this talk from different places in the bush all this night. If I should go away or if harm should come to me, you must tell the mission man in Kribi."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*" Sala's face was strained, dull with fear.

"Afternoon, gents," said Mr. Leeds. "Come up and 'ave a tiddley."

Jenkins and Malloy stepped from a boat and walked towards him. Both carried pistols.

"What is this drumming?" Jenkins asked.

"I dunno," Mr. Leeds answered. "Calling the people fer a dawnce, I s'pose."

"We came to thank you for the antelope."

Mr. Leeds went cold. In his haste he had forgotten the carcass Sala had left beside the path that morning.

"Oh, thet's all right." He tried to speak casually.

"And how do you like our—factory?"

"Wot fact'ry?"

"Don't waste time," Jenkins snapped. "You have seen everything. I do not suppose you are fool enough to try to signal that we are here."

"Blime! I said I don't know what they're drummin' abaht."

"That is good. You see, you have sold us your oil. So if anything should happen to us, you will be shot as a traitor."

"Blime, thet's right," Mr. Leeds said quickly. "I wouldn't be sich a fool as to put me own 'ead in a noose, would I?"

"I hope not. But to be sure of you we shall invite you to—visit us."

"Nah look 'ere—"

"Come along. Tell your natives you are going hunting. You will be back in a few days—perhaps. Wait—" as Mr. Leeds made to speak. "Tell them in English."

Mr. Leeds obeyed.

"I shall come?" Sala asked.

"Nah. You got your orders. Carry them out," Mr. Leeds snapped.

"Aye, *n'tangan*."

"I'll go and git me rifle," Mr. Leeds suggested.

"You will not need that. Come," barked Malloy.

"Yessir!"

THEY marched him to the bank where a small, gray flat-bottomed boat floated. Malloy took the oars and pulled downstream.

"Wot yer goin' ter do with me?" Mr. Leeds mumbled.

The two exchanged glances.

"We are holding you in protective custody." Jenkins smiled thinly. "You see, if we are discovered, it will be known that you gave assistance to the enemy and you will be executed."

"'Ow was I ter know you was Germans?" Mr. Leeds yelled.

"Listen," Malloy whispered.

From the compound came the mumble of Sala's drum.

"What is he signalling, old man?"

"I dunno, I tells yer—"

There was a blinding flash in Mr. Leeds' eyes as Malloy slashed him across the head with the pistol.

"Speak, swine, or we will feed you to the crocodiles."

"You oughter be ashamed, 'ittin' an old man," Mr. Leeds whimpered. "You 'eard me tell 'em we're goin' 'untin'. They ain't never seen a submarine. 'Ow could they report one?"

"What are you doing on the border, so far from other whites?" demanded Jenkins. "Perhaps you are a government agent?"

Mr. Leeds got an idea.

"I ain't talkin'," he growled.

"Talk." Malloy lifted the pistol menacingly.

"I don't wanter be mixed up wi' whites," Mr. Leeds sulked. "They ain't done nuthink fer me, I ain't got nuthink ter do with them."

"Oh, police, eh?" Jenkins grinned toothily. "You poach elephants, you steal oil, you are a criminal."

"'Ere, 'ere," Mr. Leeds protested. "Mind yer tongue. All I want is ter be let alone."

"Especially by the police," Jenkins insisted.

The two conferred for some minutes, Mr. Leeds listening in vain. Then Jenkins turned to him.

"You would like to make a lot of money, eh?"

"Who wouldn't?" Mr. Leeds looked cunning.

"You don't care how you get it?" sneered Malloy.

"Not so long as I do get it," Mr. Leeds answered defiantly.

"You will work for us?"

"'Ow much?"

"Listen, swine," Jenkins barked. "You will do as you are ordered, and you will be well paid. Otherwise you will die, *verstehen?* Either by our guns, or by your own stupid hangman. You have no choice."

"All right," Mr. Leeds growled, after a pause. "I'm yer man."

"So. You will provide oil and provisions for us and you will be well paid."

"Yessir, kin I go back nah?"

"No, my friend," Malloy jeered. "You will stay with us until we put to sea. Then one of my men will stay with you while you obtain oil and meat against our next visit."

Mr. Leeds sat silent, brain whirling as the boat swept on. They passed the path where the oil had been unloaded and a sentry saluted stiffly. But the boat went on, skirting overhanging trees, for half a mile. Then Malloy jerked the starboard oar and forced the little vessel through a tangle of vines at the edge of a mangrove swamp. They pressed through lush greenery for a few yards then came out on a wider stretch which was practically roofed over by massive branches.

To the left was the U-boat almost invisible in deep shade. Sailors ladled

thick oil into the tank while the pump worked steadily. The sub was about 130 feet long and Mr. Leeds could see one small machine gun on the conning bridge. Under a shelter two men worked over a portable forge.

Sailors crowded the bank, saluting as Jenkins stepped ashore. He snapped orders and they grinned as Mr. Leeds clambered stiffly to the bank. A pasty lot, he decided sourly; looked as if a square meal would do 'em good. But under branches hung haunches of meat.

"Now, my friend. You will take charge of cooking this filthy oil," Malloy said. "Skim off the dirt and see the oil is properly cleared before it fouls my tanks."

"Right you are."

"Say 'sir' when you talk to me, swine," raged the officer suddenly.

"Yessir!"

"That is better. Do your work and you shall live, you prison dog; otherwise I'll have you flogged to death."

MR. LEEDS was scared. He stealthily counted twenty-four men and wondered how the hell he could overcome them all. The puncheons were being burned as fast as they were emptied and the dark liquid oil gurgled through the hose far too quickly to please him. He shot a glance under the trees. There were still thirty puncheons not yet broached. Blime! he thought, they'd have them all empty by midnight.

But the sun was sinking and deep shadows filled the creek. Jenkins snapped an order and the fire was put out. The sailors formed line under Malloy's orders and filed aboard the sub.

"You, get aboard," Jenkins commanded. "We are securing for the night."

So they dared not risk the fire being seen at night. That would give Hope a chance of doing something—if he understood the drum talk.

Mr. Leeds stepped over a gangplank and was hustled through an iron door in the conning tower. Inside was a control-room, filled with dials and polished steel wheels and levers. A steel ladder led down a circular trapdoor. A sentry prodded Mr. Leeds and he gingerly descended.

Below was another chamber with more controls, a circular column enclosed the periscope. A dull orange electric light gleamed on oiled metal. It was hot and oily and from somewhere came the smell of cooking. All was silent as the pump was shut off. The lights seemed to be run from batteries.

"Through there."

Mr. Leeds hunched and stepped through a circular hatch in the for'ard bulkhead and stood in a curtained alleyway. Jenkins shoved him to the left.

There was a table covered with a green cloth. Above it four pipe bunks were laced against the wall. Numerous tubes and cables cut down headroom. And over a clock on the bulkhead was a sailor's cap with a ribbon marked *M. S. ABO.*

"Souvenir," grinned Jenkins, noting Mr. Leeds' startled glance.

"Bahstids," muttered Mr. Leeds.

"What?"

"Them fools aboard the *Abo,*" said Mr. Leeds, hoping God wouldn't strike him dead. "They're fools for shippin' in war-time."

"You are a man of some sense," remarked Jenkins.

"Yessir." Mr. Leeds considered snatching for the officer's pistol, but managed to quell that impulse.

Malloy looked in, then stepped across the corridor. Mr. Leeds' heart leaped as he heard the whine of a radio.

Maybe someone'd pick up their signal. He had heard that planes could find subs by their radios.

"Don't be too hopeful," Malloy said, stepping in. "We do not send messages, we listen only."

"I should 'ope not," Mr. Leeds replied stoutly. "I don't wanna get caught 'ere."

"You won't be caught—unless you become too clever."

"Clever." Mr. Leeds smirked. "That's a good 'un. You got yer sub right in 'ere without bein' spotted. I cawn't match that fer cleverness."

Malloy smirked.

"You are right. It is time you English and Americans decided that and sur-

rendered so that we can get on with our real work. Fools!"

"Say," Mr. Leeds looked admiring, "'ow did yer manage to get into these creeks?"

"We have had charts of these waters for years, my friend. There is a channel opposite here, which is completely filled with trees. We can get in and out with no one knowing—"

"*Sie ruhig!*" snapped Jenkins. "You, get out of here."

"M-me?" stammered Mr. Leeds. "Where do I go?"

Jenkins called out something and a sailor appeared.

"Follow this man. You can eat and sleep in the control-room."

Mr. Leeds preceded the sailor up the ladder and sat on the deck. The sailor made a playful lunge at him with a bayonet, and grinned as Mr. Leeds ducked nimbly.

"Keep that off me, Fritzie," he yelped. "I'll go round you like a cooper 'round a cawsk."

"*Steigen!*" growled the sentry.

"You, too!" snapped Mr. Leeds, reaching for his pipe.

"*Verboten,*" growled the sailor, eyeing it wistfully.

"You'd like a puff o' that, wouldn't yer now? Well, yer don't get none of it, see."

An orderly brought a bowl of stew which Mr. Leeds swallowed noisily. Then he drank some water, stringent with chlorine.

Two more sentries passed him and went out on deck. He heard one pacing up and down. The other patrolled the shore, he figured. He settled back watching the guard. The man was thin, nervous as a cat, his face gray with stubble.

He jumped at every sound that came from the shore, Mr. Leeds noticed, and his face was strained with the effort of listening.

There was a breath of warm air from a ventilator above him and the close atmosphere made Mr. Leeds feel very sleepy.

"'Night, Fritzie," he mumbled. "Pleasant dreams, me green-faced bucko."

"If it comes, you will die."

CHAPTER V

DEVILS DON'T LIKE GUNS

HE WAS awakened by a foot in his ribs and looked up, shaking an aching head.

"Blime! Wot a mouth!" he mumbled, glaring at Malloy, who, puffy-eyed in the dim light, ordered him to his feet.

"Get ashore, and start work," he growled.

Mr. Leeds staggered on deck. The sailors were washing in the creek, hastening to collect wood for the fire.

"Get that oil stirred up," Malloy ordered.

"Yessir." Mr. Leeds tried to search the narrow belt of sky visible between the trees as he poked at the solidified oil. But there was nothing in sight. What if the message had not been understood? His heart sank.

When the oil was liquid the pump started. It was barely light and cold with a chill mist rising from the swamp. Some sailors struggled to roll another puncheon towards the fire.

"*Achtung!*" shouted Jenkins, from the conning tower. Some threw water on the fire, others ran to a rack of rifles and took cover under the trees.

Then Mr. Leeds heard the hum of a distant airplane.

A sailor ran to the gun on the conning bridge, fitted a belt of ammunition and crouched, peering through the screen of palm fronds. The humming grew to a roar. Jenkins grabbed Mr. Leeds, running him under the trees.

"So—you did warn them, you dog! You swine!" he raged, slamming the old man to the ground.

"I never did," gasped Mr. Leeds. "I ain't done nuthin'. Must be a patrol. I ain't never seen one near 'ere."

"You wait, my friend."

The plane wheeled close to the treetops, its motors racketing so that clouds of birds rose, screaming. It passed the creek, its shadow covering the trees like a dark cloud.

"If it comes, you will die." And Mr. Leeds felt Malloy's pistol grinding into his neck.

Mr. Leeds crouched, motionless with fear. If that plane dropped bombs he'd go up with the rest. He hadn't counted on that. He felt small, his stomach felt empty and ached. Then, "'Ell with it," he mumbled. Better he should go than the sub get away.

He crouched, trying to peer through the leaves as the plane quartered the skies over the estuary like a hawk. The Germans stood against trees, their faces glimmering in the half light.

For nearly a half hour the plane wheeled. Then its motors faded.

"Now, my friend, you will account for that visit," Jenkins said slowly.

Mr. Leeds slumped to the ground. Failed! The plane would report nothing there and Hope would think the whole thing a mistake.

"Listen," he whined, fighting for time to think. "I didn't 'ave nuthink to do with it! Think I want ter git killed?"

"I don't know," gritted Jenkins. "But you will stay here until we are fueled. Then we will see. If that plane comes again—"

"Listen, mister," Mr. Leeds whispered urgently. "We gotta git this oil aboard, case the plane comes ag'in. We gotta melt it quick." His brain was simmering with a wild idea. An idea that had one tiny chance of working. "Listen, mister, put them puncheons in the sun, along the creek bank, 'ere, so the sun can warm the oil. It'll melt faster. Then, maybe we can get 'em emptied before dark."

"You talk sense," Jenkins commented.

The puncheons made an unbroken line along the creek bank. The slanting sun just reached them.

Now Mr. Leeds relit the fire and the sailors started ladling more oil. The pump sucked and pulsed and the oil disappeared rapidly. Mr. Leeds snapped orders, dancing grotesquely about the fire.

"So, you fear your own bombs," Malloy jeered.

Once Mr. Leeds excused himself.

"Where are you going?" snapped Jenkins.

"Me stomach's bad," he apologized.

Grinning, Jenkins ordered a guard to watch the old man. He retired into the bush under the eye of the sailor, then returned and went on skimming the oil.

TWICE during the next hour he retired and the second time the guard contented himself with watching from the fire.

There were twenty-one puncheons of oil left and a gang of sailors had rowed across the creek to pull away a screen of branches that filled a narrow gap to the wider lagoon.

Mr. Leeds excused himself again. He walked slowly under the trees, fumbling at his belt. Then he dodged behind a canvas shelter and ran like a cat to a stretch of swamp. Hopping over the gray mangrove roots he reached the other side and lay in the vines to listen.

In ten minutes there were soft shouts and the crackle of undergrowth stamped under heavy boots. He shoved his face into the ground as someone floundered close, but the man missed him and, wait-

ing a few minutes, he stole away to the east, silent as a shadow.

In half an hour he crouched, mud-stained and sweating, on the river bank. He was free. Those Nazis dared not go far from their sub. Listening, he could hear nothing; they had cut off the pump. Did that mean they would try to get away before dark?

But the sky was already becoming somber; they'd have no time to risk the narrow passage through the swamp; too much chance of running aground to be trapped in plain view. Panting, he struggled through low branches, climbing over swamps along the bank.

Suddenly it was dark and he had to move cautiously, for crocodiles lurked on the mudflats; he could smell their oily musky scent.

He sensed a gleam of light behind him and crouched as it fanned the water. The boat rowed by two sailors moved jerkily upstream, a flashlight playing over the bank. He lay flat until it passed, then made after it.

It was two hours before he was opposite his compound. The boat was tethered to the opposite bank. There was a fire and natives cringed before three Nazis. Then they got into the boat and pulled swiftly down-river.

Mr. Leeds peered carefully across the black water. Natives milled restlessly, staring at his hut. Then he saw a figure moving in it.

So, there was a Nazi waiting for him.

Gnawing his mustache the old man glared up and down the black river. There was no canoe and he could not swim across the stream. But he had to get word to the Bulus.

Then he saw Sala standing close to the fire. Pursing his lips, Mr. Leeds imitated the parrot cry. Sala looked over, hesitated, then walked down to the river bank.

His stocky figure outlined against the fire, Sala stared across the stream. Mr. Leeds ducked out of cover for a second, then hid himself.

"Bring—canoe," he whispered. "Softly, softly."

Sala glanced at the hut, then crept to the canoes, loosed one and stealthily paddled it from the bank. Mr. Leeds worked his way upstream, fearful that Sala would come straight over and be seen from the hut. Quietly he moved, whistling the parrot call until Sala, following the sound, was well upstream from the compound. Then he stepped out of cover and dropped into the canoe.

"There is a water path from the village."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

The canoe crossed again and Mr. Leeds hopped out and trotted up the path to the village. The chief squatted outside his hut, watched anxiously by the villagers.

"*N'tangan.* What manner of palaver is this?"

"Hear me, chief," Mr. Leeds whispered. "A bad man waits at my house to kill me. You must help."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"Hear then. You will take a call drum into the forest and you will call the mission man at Kribi saying, 'Come quick, come quick, come quick.' Wait," as the chief rushed to the drum. "You will do this when you hear the parrot call. The white man will come here, but you will hide from him. Is it understood?"

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"Good."

Followed by Sala, Mr. Leeds stole along the path to his compound. The path opened beside his hut. Crouching there in pitch blackness he peered out. The Bulus still moved about the fire. He heard movement and the uneasy shuffle of a booted foot inside his hut.

A PARROT call ripped the quiet.

At once the village drum began its thumping. There was an exclamation and a Nazi sailor bounded out of the hut, a service rifle in his hands. He shouted something at the natives, then switched a flashlight about the bushes. Mr. Leeds shoved Sala flat, crouching above him. Then the German found the path and lumbered along it toward the village.

Leeds waited a moment then rushed into his compound.

"O, Sala, take all canoes to the village. You will take men and women

too across the river, leaving one old man here. Then you will wait for me."

He watched the natives run to the canoe and steal upstream. Then he ran inside the hut and found his rifle. He was scrambling under the bed for cartridges when he saw the gleam of light. Loading, he jumped behind his door as the German pounded into the compound. Shouting something he ran towards the river, but the natives had disappeared upstream. Then he wheeled toward the hut.

There was a roar as Leeds' gun spat a bullet between his feet. "Hands up, ye dirty name," yelled Mr. Leeds, "or I'll blow yer inside aht."

He heard a faint "*Kamerad.*"

The man walked towards him, hands above his head. Leeds stooped down and secured his heavy pistol and flashlight.

"Now, march!" he snapped, shoving the sailor towards the village path. They reached the village as the natives were piling down the path towards the river. The chief stopped.

"Tie him, tight," Mr. Leeds ordered. "Put him in a hut and an old man with spear to watch him."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

Swiftly they bound the sailor who glared with terrified eyes, murmuring pitifully.

"S'all right, sonny," Mr. Leeds said. "You 'old still and you'll be O.K., savvy? I ain't got time fer you nah."

The Bulus crowded around the canoes on the river bank. Mr. Leeds shepherded them into the frail craft and led them across.

A faint drumming came from the north.

"Listen."

"A bird comes with the sun," said Sala, "and there is the *n'dan* of the mission man."

"Good," Mr. Leeds snapped. "Now all men and women will make a line deep into the forest. We go to hunt elephant."

"*E ké!* What manner of talk is this?"

"Hear me." The old man spoke softly and clearly. "There are many elephants between us and the creeks. We must move softly and drive them softly-softly, keeping them between us and the river. Thus they will be trapped. You will drive them until you hear my big rifle talk. Then you will make great outcry to frighten the elephants and they will run, stampede into the creek."

"You would frighten the Germans with the elephants!" said Sala.

"You said it!" chuckled Mr. Leeds.

The long line of men, women and children pressed westward towards the creek until Mr. Leeds could hear the restless movement of large bodies through the undergrowth. On they went, moving cautiously, just stirring the herd to retreat rather than panic.

FOR hours they went climbing over lianas, ducking through vicious thorn bush until there was a faint lightening in the forest.

"False dawn," muttered Mr. Leeds. "Cawn't be far away nah."

He lifted his rifle and its heavy report seemed to fill the forest. At once the line of natives screamed like tigers and rushed forward thrashing the brush with branches they ripped as they advanced.

There were startled squeals from ahead and an enraged trumpeting. Mr Leeds fired again.

"*A voé, a voé!*" he yelled.

There were crashes ahead and the roar of many frightened beasts. The Bulus scrambled over torn branches, running faster and faster as the herd began to stampede. Mr. Leeds dashed after them shouting like a madman, firing as fast as he could load.

Then he heard the stutter of a machine gun ahead. Appalling crashes told of the frenzied brutes lumbering this way and that.

"Keep 'em going," he bellowed. "Come on. Shout, yer devils!"

The sky lightened and he could see the shaking of trees as the brutes crashed into them. Then the machine gun chattered again and there were terrified screams.

"Back! Back!" he called.

But he could not control the meat-mad natives. They pranced like devils in the dawn light and there were tre-

mendous splashes as the elephants rushed into the creek.

Then above the pandemonium Mr. Leeds heard what he was listening for: the drone of an airplane engine. He raced into the clearing. Shelters were smashed to the ground. The tank was knocked over. He stopped, cursing thankfully at the one thing he'd hoped for.

All the full puncheons had been smashed over, and their oil was covering the creek with an iridescent slick.

The sub was in the middle of the channel, its crew on deck firing rifles in the air. The machine gun fired chains of tracers straight up.

The roar of motors deepened, then rose to a deafening scream. There was an almighty explosion and the forest crouched under a deluge of mud and water. Another bomb lit on the edge of the creek and the natives fled, shrieking with terror.

Mr. Leeds dropped, gasping for breath. He couldn't move, his legs shook uncontrollably. A final tremendous explosion rolled him flat.

Next thing he knew Sala was dragging him into the forest.

"Devils come, *n'tangan*," the native was muttering, eyes rolling with fear.

"Lemme alone," grunted the white man.

Then, suddenly he was in a canoe in the broad lagoon. He heard a terrific roaring and the natives dived overboard, yelling. Then there was silence.

MR. LEEDS lay still. He didn't care what was happening; he thought he was dying. Then a shadow fell across him. He looked wearily up at the wing of a large seaplane. A door opened and the scared, fat face of Hope stared down at him.

"You all right, Charlie?"

"'Course—I am," Mr. Leeds managed to gasp. "Did ye get 'em?"

"Couldn't miss," said another voice. "That oil slick gave the game away. We were right over that creek yesterday and didn't see a thing. Got some elephants, too. Where the hell did they come from?"

"Oh, they're some pals o' mine," Mr. Leeds piped. "Got a tiddley aboard?"

"No."

"Then fer gawd's sake take me back to me compound."

Hope climbed with difficulty into the canoe.

"So long, old-timer," yelled one of the plane crew as it started its engines and roared away across the lagoon. "See you in Duala."

Hope yelled to swimming natives and they returned.

"The U-boat is smashed to bits," he reported, as they were paddled up-river. "A destroyer is on its way here to put off a landing party for prisoners and evidence. You did a fine job, Charlie. That drum talk was a masterpiece; I thought you were crazy."

The canoe nosed in to the bank and Hope helped Mr. Leeds to land.

"'Ands off," he snapped. "I'm all right."

He marched stiffly to his hut and would not talk until he had absorbed a tremendous slug of gin.

"Who was that young sprig wot called me 'old-timer'?" he snapped.

"He's the pilot of the plane. It's an American ship; they're stationed up the coast."

"One o' them clever blokes who still thinks I'm too old to fight, I s'pose?" Mr. Leeds felt fine and full of gin.

"Look here, you know all the coast, don't you, creeks and so forth?"

"'Course, I do. Why?"

"Well, they'll give you what's called a ground intelligence job."

"Wot's thet?"

"Oh, you'll scout the coast and creeks in a plane, marking out possible hiding places for subs."

"Wot!" yelled Mr. Leeds. "Go up in one o' them things? Not bloody likely! And no apologies!"

He rubbed his skinned nose reflectively.

"Might manage it at that," he murmured. "Be a good chance to spot some more trade."

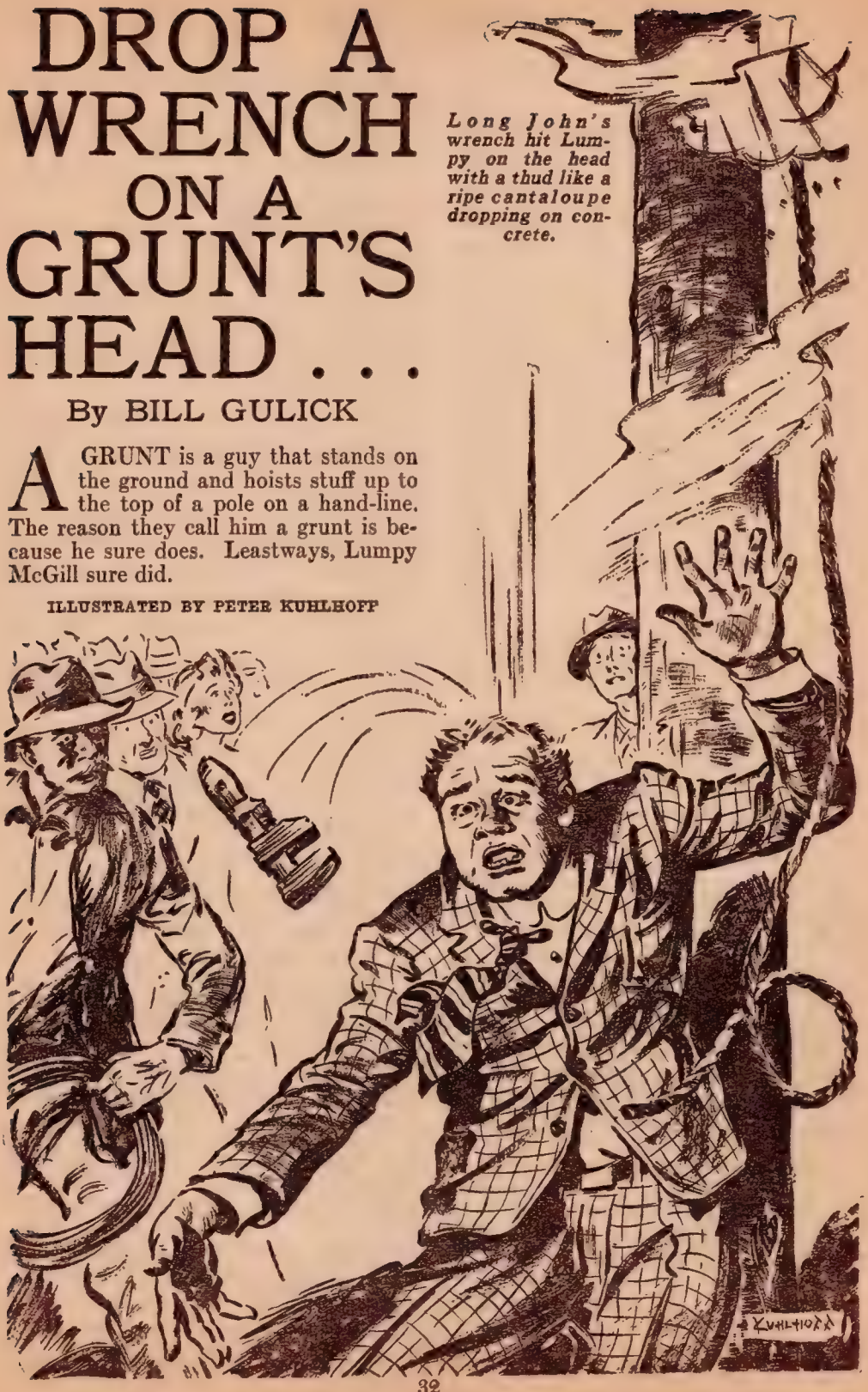
★ Everybody! BUY WAR BONDS Every Pay Day! ★

DROP A WRENCH ON A GRUNT'S HEAD . . .

By BILL GULICK

A GRUNT is a guy that stands on the ground and hoists stuff up to the top of a pole on a hand-line. The reason they call him a grunt is because he sure does. Leastways, Lumpy McGill sure did.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF



Long John's wrench hit Lumpy on the head with a thud like a ripe cantaloupe dropping on concrete.

A lineman is a grunt that has had a wrench dropped on his head. Which was the way Long John Harper acted.

These two was buddies, and I'd knew them for a long time. Long John was skinny and tall like a bean-pole. Lumpy was short and chunky like a barrel. They was both bachelors. And it was when they both fell for the same gal that the trouble started.

We had maybe a week's work left on this particular high-line job, and I was wondering where to next when I got a letter from a buddy of mine out on the Coast. "Pete," the letter says, "I'm going to Australia. They's lots of work over there, I hear. Lots of excitement too. If you're interested, get somebody to come with you and come on over."

So after work that evening I cornered Long John Harper in his room. He was shaving—which was strange, it being a Monday. He blushed when I caught him at it.

"Stepping out tonight?" I asked.

"Yeah," he mumbled. "What's on your mind?"

"Let's go to Australia."

He put down his razor. "Hell, we're too old to fight them Japs. The Army won't take us."

"We ain't too old to climb poles," I said. Then I told him about this letter. He frowned at his razor and shook his head.

"Like to go, Pete. But I reckon I better not."

"Why? You got nothing to tie you down."

"That's just it. A man, when he gets to be my age, starts thinkin' about settlin' down. He kind of begins to want things like a family and a home and maybe a wife." I scowled at him, and his face got redder and redder. "But look—whyn't you ask Lumpy? Australia is just the place for him."

I thought it was peculiar, him talking like this when he and Lumpy were buddies, but I didn't say nothing. I went to Lumpy's room. When I opened the door, he was shaving too. If it hadn't been that I was broke, I would have knew it was Saturday pay-night. "Lumpy," I said, "let's go to Australia."

"Why?" he asked, and I told him about the letter. He got as embarrassed as Long John had.

"I been thinkin'," he said. "When a fellow gets to be my age. . ."

"He wants to settle down, to have him a home and a family and maybe a wife," I recited. He stared at me.

"How did you know?"

"I'm a mind-reader," I said. Disgusted, I lit a cigarette without offering him one. "Look. Have you got involved with a gal?"

"Sort of," he admitted.

"What's her name?"

"Miss Jones. Miss Dorothy Jones. She's a schoolteacher."

Well, he was old enough to know better. So I didn't bother to explain to him about women, though I had a notion to tell him about a little experience I'd once had with a waitress in Shreveport.

"O.K," I said, and started to leave. "But if you change your mind about this Australia business, . ."

He shook his head. "Look," he blurted. "Whyn't you get Long John to go with you? He'd like Australia."

I slammed the door in his face.

THERE being nothing else to do that evening, me and the foreman, Nails Hammond, circulated around from one beer joint to another. Nails was a big man, about forty, I reckon, with a beet-red, not very pleasant face and a mouth that looked like he'd just bit into something sour. He was a bachelor—which, once you saw his face, was understandable.

We dropped in at a drugstore to buy some cigarettes, and figured we might as well have a beer while he was there. We sat down at a table, and all of a sudden Nails nudged me and said disgustedly, "Would you look at that."

I did. It was amazing. Sitting over at a corner table was Long John Harper and Lumpy McGill. And they was with a girl. I said a girl. That ain't quite right. She was on the wrong side of thirty. She was tall and skinny and her face was gaunt. She wore glasses. She sat prim and straight as a yardstick, and she had a mouth like a horizontal exclamation mark.

"No fool like an old fool," Nails muttered.

"Unless it's two old fools," I added.

Long John and Lumpy tried to act like they didn't see us, but they was both red as beet pickles. Lumpy had on a white shirt with a collar at least a size too small for him. He kept trying to ram a finger down between his neck and the collar but there just wasn't room. Long John's collar was oversize; he could of pulled his head down into the shirt without his ears touching cloth.

"Let's get out of here," Nails mumbled, finishing his beer with a gulp. "Those two old fools are disgustin'."

We got up and started out. Then this gal sitting with Lumpy and Long John saw us, and broke out a smile that looked like it hadn't been used for years. 'Hello, Mister Hammond," she called at Nails, and waved her handkerchief.

I turned and squinted at Nails. He was redder than Long John and Lumpy put together. "Evenin', Miss Jones," he muttered. He was in such a hurry to get out of the store that he stumbled over two chairs and a waitress and forgot to pick up the change for his fifty cent piece.

"Well," I said when we reached the street, "seems everybody knows the gal but me."

"I don't know her," Nails protested. "I just—" He broke off and glared at me, his mouth sourer than ever. "Do I look like a fool?"

Well, it was a spot where tact was better than truth. So I said, "No, Nails. You sure don't."

Then we went on down the street to a bar where there weren't no women around and had a couple more beers. I was glum. It looked like nobody would go to Australia with me.

LONG JOHN came into my room after supper next evening. He'd shaved again and he was wearing another clean shirt. It's amazing what a woman can put a man through.

"Sit down," I said, and poured a couple of drinks. He waved his away.

"No thanks, Pete."

"You swore off?" I asked. He blushed.

"Well, Dorothy—er, Miss Jones—she. . ."

"Yeah," I said, and drank his drink and mine too.

He ambled over to the window and propped a long leg up on the sill. I could see he was worried. Pretty soon he turned to me and said, "Pete, you been around more'n me an' you got more education than me."

"Yeah?" I said cautiously.

"Well, when a woman is kind of intellectual, when she's got brains, I mean, a man has got to be able to talk to her about things."

"Tell her she's pretty. They all fall for it."

"Not Miss Jones. She's—well, she's got brains."

I was tempted to tell him about a gal I knew in Denver once. She worked in a library all day. At night, though . . .

But I figured he wouldn't see the point, so I let it go. "What you want," I said, "is some good books to improve your mind. Right?"

"Yeah," he said eagerly. "That's it."

Well, I had a couple of books with me, so I gave them to him. One was McGuffey's Fifth Reader and the other was Everybody's Handy Pocket Dictionary. I figured they would give him a good start toward being intellectual.

He beamed as he took the books. "It sure is swell of you, Pete. I'll bring 'em back soon as I finish 'em."

"Don't bother," I said. "I've read them. Look. Lumpy's kind of crazy over this Jones gal too, ain't he?"

Long John looked sadly down at the floor. "It's too bad. He ain't her type."

"You and Lumpy used to be pretty good buddies."

"We still are. But, Pete, he ain't her type. Now if she was in love with him, I'd step outa the way in a minute. But—well, you see how it is."

I nodded. "Yeah," I said, and closed the door behind him.

I'd hardly had time to pour myself a drink when they was a knock on the door. It was Lumpy this time. He was shaved too, and crammed into another undersized shirt. He had an unhappy look on his face.

"Come in," I invited. He sat down

on the bed and tried to ram a finger between his neck and shirt collar.

"Pete," he blurted all of a sudden, "I ain't very glamorous, am I?"

I stared at him. "Neither is a ten-ton tank," I said tactfully. "But it gets along."

"That ain't what I mean. Dorothy—I mean, Miss Jones—likes men who do things. She likes active men."

"You don't exactly work sittin' down."

"That still ain't it. Sure, I work hard. But what's glamorous or heroic about hoisting crossarms an' insulators an' stuff up on a hand-line? An' look at what they call what I do. 'Grunting.' Now if they called it somethin' like 'lineman's helper' or 'groundman' or 'assistant electrician' it wouldn't be so bad. But they don't."

Which was so, all right. He was real worked up about it.

"Imagine a woman bein' married to me, an' when somebody asks her what her husband does, she says, 'Oh, he works in a high-line crew.' 'And what does he do?' they ask. 'Oh,' she says, 'he's a grunt.'"

The way Lumpy put it, it was pretty bad. I reached for the bottle. "Have a drink."

He shook his head. "Miss Jones. . ."

"Yeah," I said, and set the bottle down.

He kept staring at the floor. I felt real sorry for him. "Look," I said finally. "Ain't no reason why you couldn't start climbin' poles. All you'd have to do would be ask Nails."

Lumpy turned pale. "I been thinkin' about it. But I can't. Not even for Dorothy."

"There's nothing to it. Look at me. And Long John."

"Yeah, but that's different. You was born to be a lineman. An' Long John—hell, he had a wrench dropped on his head." Lumpy sighed. "Me, I was born to be a grunt. Reckon I'll just go on through life never gettin' more'n one foot at a time off the ground."

There wasn't nothing I could say that would help, so I changed the subject. "Long John is kind of crazy over this Jones gal too, ain't he?"

Lumpy nodded. "Yeah. An' if she was in love with him, I'd step outa the way in a minute. But she ain't. He just ain't her type."

It sure was disgusting. After Lumpy had gone out, I slammed the door behind him and poured myself another drink. It looked like I'd have to go to Australia by myself.

THINGS rocked along. By the end of the week we had the high-line almost buttoned up, and I could see that soon there wouldn't be nothing to keep me hanging around here. And the way things was getting mixed up, I was ready to pull out.

On Friday just before lunch-time I was standing by the line truck getting a drink of water when I seen a little black coupe come bouncing along the road. It stopped and a gal got out, and I could see that the gal was Miss Dorothy Jones.

I wasn't the only one that recognized her. Long John was working on a pole, and all of a sudden he got to yelling for bolts and crossarms and all sorts of things he didn't need. Lumpy run the stuff up on a hand-line, and you never seen a grunt use the kind of fancy flourishes he did.

Him and Long John was like a couple of kids standing on their heads in front of their best girl's house.

Miss Jones didn't pay no attention, just kept walking toward the line truck. Long John got so excited trying to attract her attention that he started to bore a hole in the pole with the wrong end of his brace and bit. Lumpy tied the wrong kind of a knot in the hand-line and dropped a crossarm when he had it halfway up the pole and near crowned himself.

It was disgusting.

Miss Jones came up to me. "How-do-you-do," she said, accenting each word just the same amount. "Could you tell me where I would find Mister Hammond?"

Nails was inside the line truck playing penny-ante poker with a couple of the boys. "Nails!" I yelled, and he stuck his head out the back curtain.

"What're you bellowing. . . Oh, how do you do, Miss Jones."

He said it the same way she had. I couldn't stand no more, so I went and climbed a pole and took me a nap up where the atmosphere was clearer.

When I woke up, the boys was eating lunch and Miss Jones was gone. I climbed down off the pole. "What did she want?" I asked Nails.

"Why," Nails said, "she asked me if we'd put on a little exhibition for her students tomorrow afternoon."

"Exhibition? Of what?"

"Oh, pole-climbing and such stuff. So I figured out a stunt that ought to be entertaining."

It was the limit. "What's the stunt?" I said sarcastically. "Do I climb a pole and let somebody saw it out from under me?"

Nails glared, and shook his head. "This stunt is sort of a safety demonstration. Rescue stuff. Now, understand, the reason we're doin' this is on account of public relations. Creates good will and stuff like that."

"Sure," I said, and told him to explain the stunt.

Well, he did, and it sure was harebrained. He said we'd set a forty-foot pole in the schoolhouse yard tomorrow and rig up a crossarm and some dummy wires on it. Then Long John would climb up and play like he was working. He would touch one of the wires, at the same time setting a spark to a pan of flash powder. There would be a flash, and he'd slump like he'd got electrocuted. Then I would go up and lower him to the ground on a line.

Long John was tickled. "Swell stuff," he said. "Only, Pete, you be careful the way you tie the knot in that rope to let me down."

"Listen," I said, "any cracks about the way I tie knots an' this one'll be around your neck instead of under your arms."

Lumpy was glum. "Looks like I oughta get to do somethin'," he told Nails.

"You can give Long John artificial respiration when we get him down," Nails said.

Lumpy shook his head gloomily. "That ain't very dramatic."

I sure felt sorry for him. So I got him off to one side, later, and said, "Look. This is your chance. Whyn't you trade places with me? Whyn't you climb up and rescue Long John?"

"I ain't got the nerve."

"Hell, it don't take nerve. Anybody can climb a pole."

"Anybody but me. I was born a grunt, an' I reckon I'll be a grunt the rest of my life."

"O.K.," I said, giving up. "But just remember—faint heart never won no woman."

WELL, next afternoon we set the pole in the schoolhouse yard and rigged it up the way Nails wanted it. Then Long John climbed up and hung a hand-line on the crossarm and played like he was working.

They was a big crowd watching the affair. All the students in the school was there and all their parents and a lot of the townspeople. Miss Jones was dressed up in her Sunday best; and not to be outdid, Long John and Lumpy, instead of wearing their khakis, was decked out in their over and under-sized shirts and dress-up pants.

It was disgusting.

Long John fooled around for a while upstairs, working on the wires with rubber gloves and hot-line tools like they was carrying four thousand volts. Lumpy stood by the hand-line and sent up the stuff that he needed. Me and Nails stood under the pole and watched.

"Don't put on your climbin' tools till Long John gets in the stuff," Nails told me. "That'll make it look more dramatic."

I said O.K., and laid my tools down on the ground.

Long John leaned out to tighten a clamp with his wrench. "Careful!" Lumpy shouted. Long John nodded, and gritted his teeth like he was about to bite a rattlesnake. Then he touched the spark to the pan of powder.

They was a big flash of light. Long John dropped his wrench, threw his arms about like a dying swan, and slumped in his belt like he was burnt bad. It sure looked real. I felt shivery.

They was gasps and screams from the

audience. A woman fainted. I heard a funny thud, like a ripe canteloupe dropping on concrete, and looked down just in time to see Long John's wrench hit Lumpy on the head.

That wrench must of bounced six feet back up in the air.

They was more screams from the crowd. Three more women fainted. Lumpy started reeling around like he was drunk or something, but he never did quite fall down.

"Get your tools on!" Nails growled at me, so I started strapping on my hooks.

Suddenly I heard Lumpy yelling, "Hang on, Long John! I'll come up an' get you! Just hang on!"

I guess he thought Long John was really in trouble. He sure was excited.

First thing I knew, he had shoved me away from my climbing tools and was trying to put them on. "What's the matter with you?" I grunted.

"Gotta get Long John!" he muttered, and strapped the left hook on his right foot. "Can't let my buddy burn up!"

His eyes was glazed. He was knocked out colder than a fish, and didn't know it.

Well, they say you make a lineman by dropping a wrench on a grunt's head, so I helped him strap on the hooks. Nails came running over.

"What the—harrumph!—is comin' off here?"

"No strong language," I said. "They's ladies present."

"Gotta get Long John," Lumpy mumbled, and ran toward the pole. Nails turned purple, but they wasn't a thing he could do.

Lumpy had a little trouble getting up the pole, but he made it all right. Right then, he was so worried about Long John he could of climbed a greased flag pole with an overcoat on.

He sure did look heroic scrambling up that pole. I took his place on the hand-line. When he reached Long John, he looped the line under his arms and said, "Just take it easy, buddy. I'll save you."

Long John quit playing dead and opened up one eye. "What the hell you doin' up here?" he growled.

"Just take it easy," Lumpy repeated, and jerked the knot so tight that Long John couldn't talk. "I'll get you down. Lower away!" he yelled at me, and swung Long John clear of the pole.

I PUT all my weight on the line, trying to let Long John down easy. He was scared. He floundered around like a fresh-hooked fish, and his face was as white as his shirt.

"Hold still!" I yelled.

He didn't. He swung in close to the pole, grabbed for it, missed and spun around. They was a ripping sound, and all of a sudden the seat of his best pants was hanging from a splinter. He let out a yell.

About that time, the knot which Lumpy, being excited, had mis-tied, came undone.

Long John sure did fall hard.

They was a *ker-whump*, then there he was, sitting spraddled out on the ground, cussing a purple fit. Nails run up, and he was cussing too, and it was about even which one was doing the best job.

"Shut up!" I told them. "They's ladies present."

Miss Jones came running over and knelt down and put her arms around Long John. "Oh, John, John—are you hurt?"

He turned red. "Not a bit," he said, and tried to grin. "That's the way I always come down."

Miss Jones took hold of his hand. "Let me help you up." Long John shook his head, and turned redder. "I'll just sit here an' rest for a minute."

The audience, seeing that the stunt was over, cheered and applauded. They sure had liked the stunt. I asked Nails if we hadn't ought to give an encore, but he said no. Miss Jones waved for silence.

"Refreshments will be served in the schoolhouse. Let's all go in." Then she took Nails by the arm and steered him toward the building.

Long John stood up then. He looked carefully around for ladies, and backed up to the pole. He sure was mad. He glared up at Lumpy and shook his fist.

"C'mon down. I want to talk with you." And he added some words which

pretty much expressed the way he felt.

Lumpy looked like a coon dog that had climbed a tree when he was all excited and now didn't know what he was doing up there. He shook his head.

"Bring me a ladder," he said weakly, "an' I will."

Long John was so mad that he started to climb up after him. Then he seen a woman looking out the schoolhouse window and figured maybe he better not. "I'll talk to you later," he yelled at Lumpy, and slipped away to change pants.

Miss Jones called from the schoolhouse. "Come, boys. The lemonade will get warm if you don't hurry."

Well, I was thirsty, so I started toward the building. Then Lumpy said, "Pete."

I stopped and looked up. "Yeah?"

"I can't get down."

"You got up there, didn't you?"

"I reckon so. But I don't know how."

He sure was bear-hugging that pole. I thought he would squeeze it in two. "Please, Pete," he begged. "Please come up an' get me."

So I climbed up and did a rescue act that there wasn't no audience for. Which was just as well.

THAT evening I decided to pull out. I packed my things and paid up my room rent. They was a freight headed west about dark, and I figured I might as well catch it. I made the rounds to tell the boys good-bye.

Lumpy was sitting on the edge of the bed in his room when I opened the door. He was looking glum. "Let's go to Australia," I said.

He shook his head. "I don't want to go to Australia."

He sure did have it bad. When you got it that way there's only one thing to do. I went over and put a hand on his shoulder. "Look. Whyn't you ask the gal to marry you?"

He didn't say anything for a minute, then he nodded his head. "Reckon I will. Listen. I'll go see her right now. If she says no. . ." He gulped hard. "Well, I'll be hoppin' that freight with you."

"It pulls out at dark," I said, and wished him luck, and then I left him.

I went to Long John's room. He was sitting just like Lumpy had been. "Let's go to Australia," I said.

He shook his head. "I don't want to go to Australia."

"Look. Whyn't you ask the gal to marry you?"

He stared at me for a minute, then got up. "I'll do it. Listen. If she says no. . ."

"The freight pulls out at dark," I said, and wished him luck.

Figuring I ought to tell Nails goodbye, I went to his room but he wasn't in. So I went on downstairs. I was walking down the steps of the front porch when I heard somebody calling me.

"Pete. Oh, Pete."

I stopped. It was Nails. He was all out of breath and red-faced, like he had been running or drinking.

"I was just leaving," I said.

He grabbed hold of my arm. "Glad I caught you. There's a little favor I want you to do for me."

"The freight pulls out in thirty minutes."

"This'll only take ten."

"O.K." So I went with him to do him this favor.

IT WAS getting dark. I sat on the flatcar waiting for the train to start. It sure looked like this Jones gal had fixed it so nobody would go to Australia with me.

The flatcar jerked, started moving. The train picked up speed. I heard somebody yell from the car behind the one I was on.

"Pete! That you?"

"Yeah," I said, and went back and helped Long John climb over the coupling. He sure looked sad.

"Australia," he muttered, "here I come."

"Did she say no?" I asked.

He shook his head. "I didn't see her. I got to thinkin', Pete. Me an' Lumpy's been pretty good buddies. He thought he was savin' my life today. He's in love with her. She ain't exactly in love with him—not like she is with me, leastways—still, she'd make him a good wife."

I could tell he was feeling mighty low. I handed him my bottle. "Drink?"

He hesitated. "Miss Dorothy—" he started absently, then grabbed the bottle and took a big swig. He said it made him feel better.

"I left my stuff a couple of cars back," he told me. "Reckon I better go get it."

I sat down when he left. Then I heard a noise up at the front end of the car.

"Pete! That you?"

"Yeah," I said, and went up and helped Lumpy climb over the coupling. He was looking sad.

"Miss Dorothy. . .?" I started.

He dropped his bundle roll on the car and sat down on it. "I didn't see her. I got to thinkin', Pete. . ."

"That Long John was in love with her and that she'd make him a good wife."

He frowned. "How'd you know?"

"I'm a mindreader," I said.

In a few minutes Long John got back with his bundle roll. When he saw Lumpy he glared.

"What're you doin' here?" he grunted.

"Goin' to Australia," Lumpy said. "An' you?"

"Goin' to Australia."

It would have been funny if it hadn't been so sad. They sat and glared at each other like they wanted to cut each other's throats.

We wasn't but five or six miles out of town when the freight pulled into a siding to wait for a troop train or something. I said I was tired and reckoned I'd take a nap. Long John and Lumpy said they was tired too.

Long John laid down at one end of the car and Lumpy laid down at the other. I called to them, "Say, in case we get separated, we'll meet at Tony's Waterfront Place in Frisco in a week."

"Why should we get separated?" Long John growled roughly.

"Ho-hum," Lumpy yawned, real loud. "I sure am sleepy."

It wasn't two minutes till they was both snoring. But I didn't go to sleep. I laid there, keeping one eye open.

Pretty soon, I saw Long John move. He got to his hands and knees and crawled to the edge of the flatcar and dropped off. I could hear him making tracks for town.

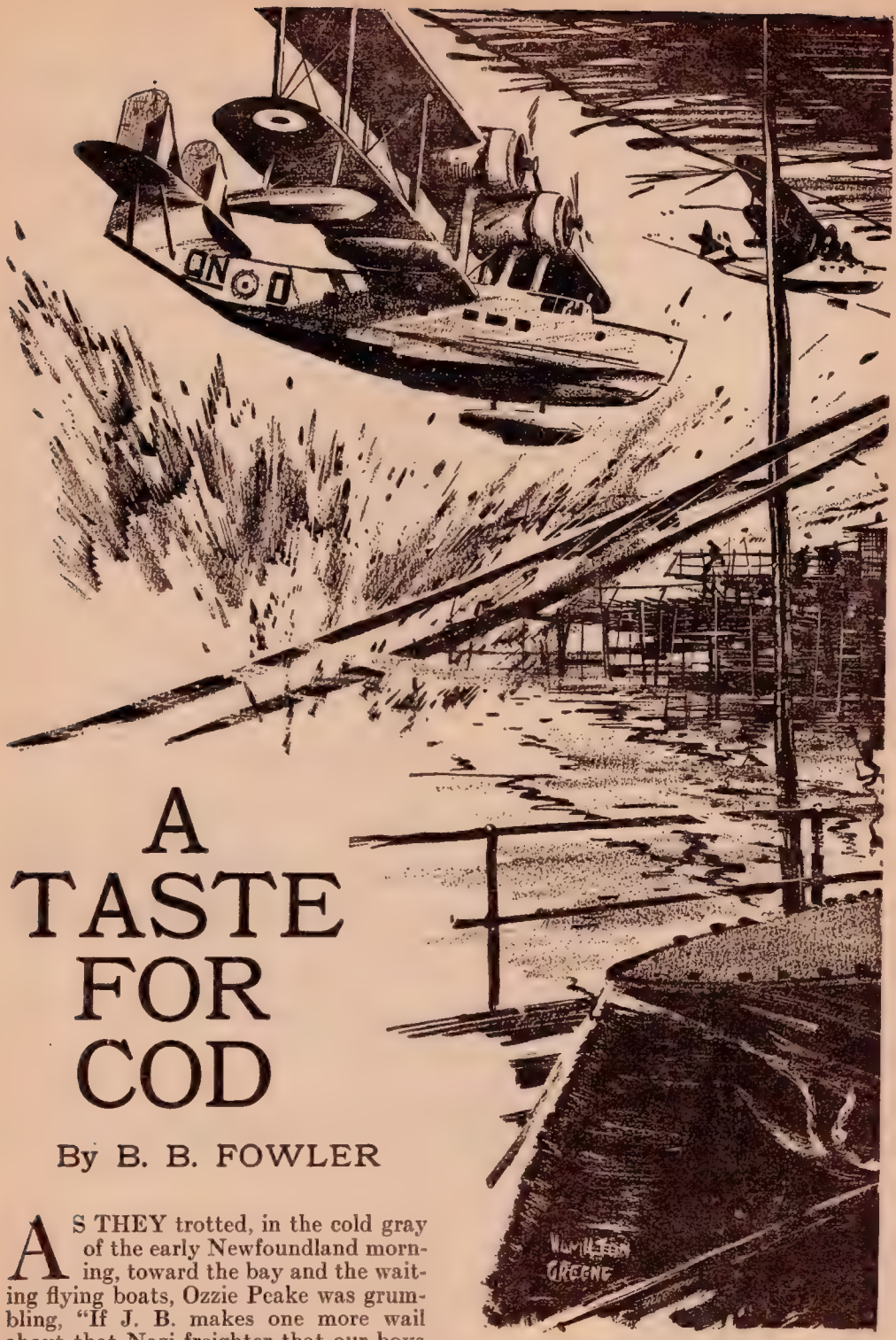
Half a minute later, down at the other end of the car, Lumpy moved. I heard him drop off the train. Then he headed for town too.

I sat up and lit a cigarette. Pretty soon, the train started. I took a swig out of the bottle, and got to musing about the way a man could make a fool of himself over a woman. It reminded me of a little incident that happened to me out in Santa Fe once. She was a blonde. She painted pictures. She was always wanting to do one of me up a pole, but someway. . .

I sighed, and wondered what Long John and Lumpy would do when they ran across each other back in town.

It'd be almost as good as when they found out that Miss Dorothy Jones had married Nails Hammond this afternoon. I could of told them about that wedding, I reckon, and how I'd been best man for it, only they was the kind you couldn't tell nothing. They always had to find out for themselves.

It sure was sad. But maybe they would find them a gal apiece when we got to Australia.



A TASTE FOR COD

By B. B. FOWLER

AS THEY trotted, in the cold gray of the early Newfoundland morning, toward the bay and the waiting flying boats, Ozzie Peake was grumbling, "If J. B. makes one more wail about that Nazi freighter that our boys sunk off Iceland, I'm going to get hysterical. Why doesn't he leave the

As Bill zoomed across the flakes, the anti-aircraft guns on the sub began to bark . . .

. . . And the hail of lead along his fuselage was the sweetest sound he had ever heard.

danged tub on the bottom where she is and stop dredging her up for us every morning before we take off?"

"It was homeward bound in ballast when the boys knocked it off," Bill Haviland said genially. "It wasn't returning from a pleasure cruise, laddy. She hadn't been carrying gumdrops to the Eskimos."

But Ozzie was still yipping like an angry terrier as he scrambled into his ship.

Bill climbed into his own ship, checked with navigator co-pilot, Ted Wright, heard the gunners and bombardier snap their responses to his routine check.

Revolving the motors, Bill Haviland felt pretty good. He was a big fellow,

tow-headed with friendly gray eyes and a wide mouth that smiled easily. He had come to Newfoundland with nice marks, had been lucky on patrol and now he was a squadron leader on the North Atlantic patrol.

They were, Bill knew, holding down an important sector of the world front. There were too many mysterious babies like the freighter the boys had sunk off Iceland; too many U-boats sneaking around the coast; too many chances that the rusty old Grand Banks fishermen might be something sinister under their patched and weathered sails.

There were altogether too many of these threats with Newfoundland sitting squarely on the crossroads of the world; riding like an anchored triangle on the path of the huge convoys out of Halifax; airfield for the bomber fleets being ferried to Britain.

THE motors of the flying boats awoke thundering echoes in the stark low hills that encircled their bay. The big flying boat lumbered heavily across the water, then lifted, losing her clumsiness as she nosed up into the gray dawn.

Bill adjusted his earphones and heard Ozzie Peake sing out, "Here we go, lads. Here we go on the fish route. Keep your mind on the tin fish, Herrin' Choker, and let the cod look after itself."

Bill grinned. He could take Ozzie's good-natured ribbing. He expected the nickname. Because he came from Nova Scotia he was a "herrin' choker" to every man who came from Ontario and the West. It was a waste of breath to tell boys like Ozzie that he was from the Annapolis Valley, land of the apples and alien to the smell of fish. He was a Nova Scotian, therefore, inescapably, a herrin' choker.

But, behind Bill's grin there remained the persistent prod of the thing that had been worrying him for days; the dull, nagging suspicion that provided Ozzie with the stuff for his jibe this morning. To Bill, there was something wrong with the picture at Rango Island.

He scanned the sea beneath him as the nose of the flying boat climbed upward into the silvery gray sky. In the early morning the tickles and inlets were like runlets of liquid silver. The innumerable small islands were gray and brown and red in the silver water. But, beyond beauty, was the disturbing thought of the countless havens such places made for the marauding U-boats with the imagination and nerve to use them.

He did not speak until he saw Rango Island looming ahead. Rango was big enough to support a fairly large fishing community. The bankers sailed out of Rango to take cod, which they brought back in salt to spread on the huge flakes for drying.

He frowned as he nosed his ship down for a closer look, his eyes studying the two bankers tied to the long pier; the huddle of white houses standing back from the narrow bay; the wide expanse of flakes, or fish-drying frames, that covered almost the entire shore of the bay.

As they nosed down, Ozzie Peake's voice chanted, "Look out below, Rango. We are the fisheries inspection boys. You are not doing a good job of curing that cod. If you don't look out we are going to report you."

But with renewed force the nagging suspicion obliterated Ozzie's taunt. Impatience gripped Bill momentarily; something below there was trying to tell him something. It was telling him something was amiss; something that he should recognize.

He looked around and caught Ted Wright grinning tolerantly. Ted was saying into the phone, "Shut up, Ozzie. The Herrin' Choker is lonely. Let the guy have his early morning whiff of salt cod and be happy for the rest of the day."

Bill smiled absent-mindedly and led the patrol outward over the cold, empty reaches of the North Atlantic. His mind was checking over the set-up as he had seen it. The two schooners belonged to Cap'n Job Malley, who operated on shares with the fishermen of Rango. The flakes were run the same way, curing the fish on a community basis. The rest was the community itself, the few people he glimpsed on the single narrow street, the few men on the pier and aboard the schooners. To all appearances there was nothing that could excite suspi-

cion. Yet Bill was far from satisfied.

He wished for a moment that he had been a fisherman. He had an idea that if he had been he would instantly recognize the flaw in the layout; and, that there was a flaw, he was stubbornly convinced.

His mind urgently scanned his childhood, trying to recall almost forgotten incidents. During that childhood he had spent two summers in Lunenberg, home of the Nova Scotia Banker fleet. He tried to recall every detail of the procedure as the fish came in from the boats, the men, women and children spreading them out on the racks to dry. But the picture was vague and fleeting. His mind could clearly retain only the recollection of the sharp, salty smell of the drying codfish and the screaming of the gulls over the harbor.

But the sensation that something was escaping his conscious memory, something critical, would not let his mind rest.

He had his course rigidly drawn before him. Yet, much later, swinging around on the apex of his triangle of flight, he made a sudden decision. He snapped directions into the inter-communication system and altered the course.

OZZIE PEAKE'S voice wailed in his ears, "Hey skipper, have a heart! Leave those fish at Rango Island alone. They'll dry nicely without you inspecting again. Look, I'll buy you a quintal of cod tomorrow. Honest, I will. Only let's just keep our noses stuck to our business and stop tearing J. B.'s orders to shreds."

Ted Wright scowled at Bill. "Look, pal, I'm not kicking. But this sort of thing is apt to get you in trouble. You know J. B."

Bill shook his head, frowning. "I'm doing this on my own initiative. I tell you, Ted, something stinks there at Rango."

"It's those fish," Ted snapped half angrily. "I've always maintained that they stink. What is perfume to your Nova Scotian nose is a stench to us guys who were brought up in lovely, fragrant Ontario."

Bill said nothing. His jaw was set grimly, even while his stomach felt weak and empty. He was doing something that might get him in wrong. But he had to have another look at Rango. He had to look once more and see if he couldn't spot what was wrong.

The sickish sensation of dread deepened in him as he saw Rango looming ahead again. The men were on the decks of the schooners now, working around the stacked dories and the bait tubs, probably getting ready for another trip to the Banks. There were a few men on the pier. One of them waved as the squadron swept over.

The irrepressible Ozzie Peake sang out, "Rango, here we are again. Oh, Rory, Rory, get the dory. There's herring in the bay."

"I hope," Ted Wright said sourly, "that you are happy, having had another look at your fish."

Bill glanced down at the fish, gray on the gray flakes, a wide carpet of fish drying in the sun.

It was then he heard the gunfire. Ted Wright threw a startled look at Bill. "That's out there along the route we should have been taking, Pal. I hope it isn't what I think it may be."

The squadron wheeled and roared outward toward the far sound of gunfire. Bill felt really sick now. He had done it this time. He had swung off his course on his own initiative. He had been loafing over Rango when he should have been out over the sea where the gunfire had thundered.

A little gray boat was going down by the head when the squadron roared down over it. Bill saw, with a further drop of his diaphragm, that it was one of the small coastal patrols. Her superstructure was ripped and torn with shellfire. Two boats beside her crawled away from her, the oars lifting and dropping like the legs of a water bug.

Ted Wright grumbled, "That tears it, pal. That's the *Manglon* going down there."

Bill made no comment. He was staring down, his jaws set, watching the *Manglon's* stern lift as she took her fatal dive.

Bill snapped on his radio and the voice

of J. B. crackled in his ears. "Patrol X-11. Patrol X-11. Where the hell are you and what goes on out there?"

Bill's voice hurt his throat as he called back, "Patrol X-11 reporting. Sighted patrol boat *Manglon. Manglon* shelled, presumably U-boat. Went down by the head. Survivors in two boats." He checked with instruments and gave the position of the two boats."

J. B.'s voice crackled more angrily. "Where is the sub? Where were you when all this happened?"

Bill sighed. "We are scouting for the sub now, sir. Will report if we locate."

He snapped off the radio and went on a prowl over the wrinkled sea. A man was standing up in one of the boats, waving his arms wildly, pointing toward the southwest.

Ozzie Peake was singing drearily, "All for a mess of salt cod he left us; all for a smell of the fish on the racks."

THEY formed a brief huddle when they climbed out of the planes. Ozzie Peake's dark eyes were sharp with concern. There was no kidding now. They all knew what Bill faced.

"Look, if you could only cook up a fast one, pal. We'd stick with you and your story. Maybe we saw something suspicious; a strange schooner or something, and swung out to look it over. But it had better be good, pal. Because J. B. is going to have blood in his eyes."

Bill shook his head. "It's my funeral. I led you off the course. Taking another squint at Rango was my idea. I'll take the dose, whatever it is."

They followed him gloomily to operational headquarters. They clustered like a group of mourners at a funeral as Bill squared his shoulders and went in to face J. B.

J. B. was sitting at his desk, his posture painfully rigid. His eyes were accusing, his face bleakly set. "Well?" he said brusquely as Bill saluted.

Bill stood rigidly at attention. "It was my fault, sir. I led the patrol off the course."

"Why?" J. B. spat the word at him like a bullet.

Bill swallowed painfully. "There is something wrong with the set-up at Rango."

"Rango!" J. B.'s lean face took on a pinkish tinge under the tan. "By heaven, Haviland, this is too much. For two days you've been griping to me about something at Rango. I was willing to listen at first. I sent a special patrol out there to look it over. They reported everything regular and in order. What's the matter with you, now? Have you been having hallucinations?"

"No, sir," Bill said stubbornly. "I can't tell exactly what it is. But there is something there that's off color."

Icicles were forming on J. B.'s words. "Haviland, there is a limit to my patience. You've made Rango a joke. You and your hunch are the laughing stock of the field."

He drew in his breath as if he were fighting for control. "Haviland, it appears that I must remind you that this is one of the most important sectors on the whole world-wide war front. I shouldn't have to tell you of the importance of the Newfoundland airfield. I shouldn't have to tell you of the importance of the sea lanes we are supposed to be guarding. If you were sufficiently aware of these things it should be apparent to you that to do our job efficiently depends on how reliable every man-jack of us is in obeying orders. We believed you reliable when we gave you command of your patrol. But now, by heaven, I believe we made a disastrous mistake."

His dark eyes bored into Bill's face. "Because of you, a U-boat got clean away after sinking the *Manglon*. If you had been where you were supposed to have been you'd have had a chance of adding a U-boat to your record. As it is, that U-boat is thumbing its nose at us, while it looks for its next target."

He paused for more breath and went on explosively, "Dammit, man, you've heard me enough on the subject of that freighter that was sunk off Iceland. She was returning from a trip somewhere in these waters. Probably delivering fuel and ammunition to that U-boat you didn't sink. The shells that sunk the *Manglon* probably came from her hold.

"That freighter constitutes a black

mark against us, Haviland. If we'd been doing the job we should have been doing we would have spotted her while she was here. We didn't. So she got rid of her cargo, whatever it was, and set out for home. Sure, the boys in Iceland got her. But they got only the empty boat."

Bill spoke up thickly. "I know, sir. But I still don't see how any such freighter could have gotten by without being spotted in our sector."

"I'll tell you how," J. B. stormed. "She got by because men like you think that their hunches are more important than orders."

He banged a fist on his desk. "I don't know what will be your punishment for this, Haviland. That will have to come from higher up and I trust it will be severe enough to serve as an example to others. But, for the present, you are grounded. You will remain at your quarters until your case is settled."

Bill walked into his quarters in the thick hush that told him the boys had been talking his case over before he came in.

He looked at Ozzie Peake, smiling wryly as he said, "Well, the Herrin' Choker doesn't fly any more."

Ozzie said swiftly, "Look, pal, it can't be as bad as that. You pulled a boner. So what? You'll be back in a few days. They'll ride the blazes out of you to drive home the lesson, then they'll let you put your frame behind the controls again. You're too good a man to keep on the ground, Bill."

Bill hoped that there was something in what Ozzie said. He knew his record was more than just good. That's why they had made him a squadron leader. They'd probably put him back in the air. But not as a squadron leader again. He'd lose that much. And that, to Bill, was plenty.

THE kidding started again that evening. Bill was sitting on the edge of his bed, staring moodily at the floor when the gang came in. Ozzie led them, carrying a long object wrapped in brown paper.

Ozzie, as usual, was spokesman. "We have been talking your case over, Bill. Tomorrow morning we go out as usual to see all the beautiful, smelly fish drying on the racks. And you won't be with us, pal. You'll be sitting back here, homesick for a sight of them, longing for a whiff of them. The thought breaks our hearts. So we decided to do something about it."

He gravely unwrapped the parcel and held up a huge salt cod. "Just so you won't feel too bad back here, we brought you this. You can look at this and smell it and imagine you are back with us doing the fisheries inspection act again."

He glanced at the weak smile Bill forced and said soberly, "Heck, I guess it isn't so funny after all. Excuse, please."

"Forget it, Oz," Bill said. "It is kind of funny, at that."

They went out leaving the fish lying on the floor. The smell of it filled the room. Bill got up and kicked it into a corner; not that he minded the smell, but what it stood for made him feel ill all over again.

The scent of the dried cod followed him into uneasy slumber. He was a boy again, sitting on a pier at Lunenberg, watching the men and women and children swarming over the racks, stacking the cod in numerous piles so that they could be covered with strips of tarpaulin against the threat of a shower.

That was the only method of protection. Tarpaulin enough to cover the wide expanse of racks where the fish lay drying would be prohibitive. Hence the stacking of the fish so that they could be covered by the squares of tarpaulin they kept for the purpose.

He sat up in bed as abruptly as if someone had dashed him with cold water, wide awake and alert, knowing now what it was that was wrong at Rango.

The dawn patrol was filing out as he pulled on clothes with fingers that shook with eagerness. By the time he had on his flying suit the gang had gone out, trotting down to the inlet where the flying boats were warming up.

J. B. scowled at the flying suit, then shook his head slowly. "Nothing doing, Haviland. You are still grounded. Don't try to talk yourself out of it."

"But, I've got it, sir," Bill said earnestly. "I know now what it was that made me suspicious at Rango."

He put his fists on the desk, leaned forward and talked.

J. B. shook his head. "No, Haviland, it has to be something better than that. It's a nice story. But it isn't good enough. You are still grounded."

He turned to the microphone and snapped, "Patrol X-11. Patrol X 11. Are you ready?"

Bill went out with the voice of Ozzie Peake answering, "Patrol X-11 reporting—"

He started across the field, rage making the blood pound at his temples. He knew he was right. If J. B. hadn't been a soulless martinet he would have seen the logic of it. It was such a small thing, to be sure. Yet, to Bill, its implications were as obvious as the sight of a black cloud starting to cross the face of the sun.

Ted Wright came running around the corner of a hut. Ted would be flying his own ship this morning, with Ozzie acting as squadron leader.

Bill called suddenly, "Hey, Ted! Wait a minute!"

Ted halted. "Make it snappy, pal. I'm late now."

"You're going to be a heck of a lot later," Bill snapped, as he hit him flush on the jaw.

He rolled Ted behind a corner of the hut and raced across the field toward the inlet and the waiting flying boats. Ozzie Peake was yelling, "Snap out of it, you dope. We're ready to go."

Bill kept his head down, grateful for the gray twilight that made all the boys look so much alike, misty figures running for their ships.

There was a new co-pilot on the flying boat into which Bill climbed. His eyes narrowed as he looked at Bill, "Hey, I thought you were grounded. Where's Ted Wright?"

"Ted is sick," Bill snapped. "J. B. softened up at the last minute and gave me this crate. Now, shut up, and let's check. We're away to the races."

Ozzie's voice sang over the inter-communication system, "No fisheries inspection this morning. We'll just wave good-morning to Rango for poor old Bill."

Bill grinned mirthlessly as he listened. Then his mouth set in a straight, stubborn line. What he was going to do might cost him more than a mere grounding. On the other hand it might avert the greatest disaster that had ever threatened the air force in Newfoundland.

He thought of the big airfield with the bombers for Britain standing wing to wing in packed rows. He thought of the endless miles of runways and the huge sprawling hangars. The picture of what a few well-placed one-ton block busters could do there made his spine crawl.

His nerves became tingling wires as he saw Rango lifting out of the gray sea ahead. The first light of morning touched the white houses and made them shine ghostily. The long pier was like an admonitory finger thrust out into the shimmering waters of the narrow bay.

But it was at the flakes Bill was looking; the wide expanse of fish flakes stretched along one shore of the bay, the salt cod forming a solid gray blanket over the frames.

His face was set in taut lines, as he yelled, "Pull on your socks, boys, and hang onto your hats. Here we go!"

Ozzie Peake's voice screamed in his ears as he slapped the big ship into a dive. Ozzie was yelling, "Hey, you crazy bum, come out of that! Do you think you're Bill Haviland taking a look at the fish?"

In his own ship everyone was yelling. The new co-pilot looked at Bill as if he were crazy.

But Bill saw only the flakes rising like a gray flat field to meet him. This was it. If he were wrong he might just as well bail out somewhere over the Atlantic. Because if he were wrong he was as wrong as he ever wanted to be.

He watched the men run as he roared down. He grinned stiffly. He had to be right.

THE stuttering hail of lead along his fuselage was the sweetest sound he had ever heard. He had pulled it right. He had pancaked them into action.

The co-pilot had a shocked, scared expression on his face as he yelled, "Hey, they're shooting at us down there! What gives?"

Bill zoomed across the flakes, so low that he could almost count the fish. Then he saw the sub, hidden snugly under the camouflage of an extension of flakes. As he spotted it, men were racing along it toward the anti-aircraft guns.

He shot upward out of his dive, snapping on the inter-communications phone. "How do you like that?" he screamed. "How do you like that ack-ack?"

As he spoke, the anti-aircraft guns on the sub began to bark. He looped his ship over, barking orders to his crew. "Bomb bays open! Lay those eggs right along those flakes back of that extension, and see what you see."

The bombardier's voice had an odd, constricted sound as he snapped, "Bomb bays open, sir."

Bill zoomed down again, yelling, "Bombs away!"

He stopped the flying boat almost on her tail, almost in a stall. He had to see this one. His whole future depended on it.

As the bombs struck the flakes, the curtain of fish surged upward, shredding into a flying shower of salt cod. With it went strips and segments of the flakes. There were also larger segments. Bill grinned with cold satisfaction as he saw the black swastika standing out boldly on a broad segment of plane wing.

Ozzie Peake's voice was high, almost hysterical as he screamed, "Holy Hannah, Nazi planes!"

Bill climbed his ship, snapping into the phone, "Give it to 'em right along the whole line of flakes. That's where they are. Give it to 'em."

He grinned widely as he watched the ships peel off, diving down toward their targets.

He threw a glance at his stunned co-pilot. "How do you like the idea of Nazi planes for fish, buddy?"

The blast of the explosion behind Ozzie Peake's ship flipped his big plane as if it had been a dead leaf. That, Bill guessed, would be some of the block busters that the Nazis had intended for destroying the Newfoundland airfield.

He looped his ship and dived again. "Take the sub this time," he yelled.

The sub was sliding forward, trying to get out into deep water and submerge. It hadn't a chance. But the Nazis at least were making a try for it.

The roar of the bombs was like music to his ears. He swung his ship around and smiled tightly as he gunned his motors. The nose of the sub had lifted until the U-boat seemed to be trying to stand on her tail. Then she rolled slowly as she went down.

Bill snapped on the radio and listened to J. B.'s voice calling, wildly, "Patrol X-11! Patrol X-11! What goes on? Report, Patrol X-11."

Ozzie Peake was calling back, "Patrol X-11 reporting. Fisheries detail calling. Salt cod market looking up. Reduced seventeen tons of salt cod to a boneless, shredded product at Rango Island. Also school of Nazi planes and one U-boat. Break out the medals; we are coming in for same."

As they swung back toward the patrol center they saw the other squadron of big planes streaking toward Rango. Out to sea a pair of destroyers were trailing flat pennants of smoke across the wrinkled sea as they raced toward the island.

Ozzie Peake was calling, "Good old Navy. Go on in and pick up the pieces."

J. B.'S face was a frozen mask as he faced Bill across his desk. Bill talked fast. "I knew there was something wrong, sir. But I didn't know what. Then I remembered, just as I told you earlier. No fisherman ever leaves cod out on the racks overnight. The least moisture starts the fish deteriorating. Continued wetting ruins them. That's why they stack them late every afternoon and cover them for the night. They don't put them out again until the sun has come up and the racks are dry once more. What I saw there in the dawn each morning was a dead give-away. The fish were not intended for market. They were there for just one thing—camouflage. I knew that there was plenty of room underneath those racks

for storage, once I recognized what was wrong. But I didn't know they were using the space for assembling planes to use the fuel and bombs they might have stored there.

"That's what that German freighter must have been doing, sir. She probably brought the knocked-down planes, fuel and bombs across along with the aviators and mechanics. Somewhere on the Banks she grabbed the two schooners and transferred the load to them. The U-boat probably brought more. Then they seized Rango.

"Judging by the results we got, sir, those planes were about ready to pay us a little visit, for they appeared to be loaded. Once they laid their eggs on our airfield they could have flown back to Norway easily."

He turned his head as Ted Wright came into the office. One side of Ted's jaw was red and swollen. The ghost of a grin pulled at his lips as he saw Bill.

But Ted's eyes were wide and innocent as they turned to J. B. "I guess I was all balled up before, sir. It wasn't Bill who hit me. It was some other guy. I remember seeing Bill. But he didn't hit me. He saw the guy slug me and ran to take the ship so the patrol wouldn't be held up."

J. B. looked at Bill, his head shaking slowly. "This has got me stalled, Haviland. How the heck am I going to discipline a guy who will be flying to Headquarters to be hung with decorations? Maybe you could figure it out.

"And how are we going to keep an eye on the salt cod without a man who understands them?"

His tone changed. "O. K., Haviland, go back to your quarters. Give me a little time and I'll figure a way out of this."

Ozzie Peake was standing in front of the hut. He was holding the daddy of all salt cod. He held it before Bill, saying, "You're not getting this now, Herrin' Choker, so you can wipe that avid look off your pan. We are sending it to St. John's to have it gold-plated and put on a silver plaque."

He jerked around as J. B.'s voice barked from the loud-speaker. "Former Patrol X-11, attention! Former Patrol X-11! henceforth to be designated Codfish Patrol. Members of Codfish Patrol report at Headquarters immediately. Final report on Nazi planes and U-boat being received. All planes destroyed by bombs. Underseas craft sunk with entire crew. Nazi aviators rounded up; admit planned raid to be staged with eight planes carrying six tons of bombs apiece. Report verifies that given by Squadron Leader Haviland. Codfish Patrol report Headquarters immediately for further details."

Ozzie Peake shook his head. "Codfish Patrol. Jeepers, creepers, isn't that what you'd expect to get for flying behind a herrin' choker!"

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE

PATROLS ARE EVERYWHERE

By
R. W. DALY

At that moment the German located Alexei's opening and sprayed it with bullets.

ILLUSTRATED BY CARL PFEUFER

ALEXEI did not recognize the uniforms worn by the men behind him on the trail, but he did know that many bullets were streaming about him. "Germans," he muttered, and unslung his rifle, while his sharp black eyes looked for the best cover among the rocks where he was crouching.

Alexei did not have much politics. Those were for other men who had not spent their lives hunting in the mountains. All Alexei knew about politics was that he did not like the Germans. It was not a haphazard judgment. He did not like the Germans because of a single incident, isolated by insignificance from the rest of the war. Then, Alexei's little village, sprouting in a valley, had been savagely attacked by bombing planes. Alexei's father, a raw-boned, burly man who had been in the patriot army organized in Crete during the first Great War, was one of the few men in the village who could tell the identity of German airplanes from the black marks on their wings. Alexei considered that very clever, but his father's cleverness had not saved him from the explosives and machine gun bullets which the Germans had dropped and fired into a village which their commander thought could possibly contain some guerrilla warriors sympathetic to Mihailovitch.

As a matter of fact, few in Alexei's village had taken up arms against the conquerors of Yugoslavia, but the raid did

make a convert to the cause of opposing the Nazis. Looking at the remains of his family after a fragmentation bomb had scattered them, Alexei had troubled to think and reach a conclusion. This thinking was a process from which he had formerly been saved by the simplicity of his life, but a man doesn't return to his home after a day's work and find that home and its happiness destroyed without experiencing resentment. When a man finds his Maria, a gentle girl of sixteen, sprawled on her innocent face, quite dead because of two holes in her back, a man cannot overlook her death. A man asks questions.

"Who did it?" Alexei demanded of Maria's father, who had only lost an arm in the raid.

"They did it," the old man answered sadly.

Alexei had suspected, of course, but he had wanted confirmation. Heretofore, he had never seriously considered the invaders; until the attack, the flood which had swept over the Balkans had not affected him. When, at the beginning of the war, some of the young men of the village had put on their uniforms and gone to their reserve regiments, Alexei had not even felt sorry that men of seventeen could not go along. He had been satisfied with his life. Now, of course, that life was over.

"Where is the army?" he asked.

"There is only Mihailovitch," Maria's father answered, and gestured to the west.

WITHOUT a word of farewell, Alexei slung his rifle over his shoulder and started on his way. All he needed was the general direction in which to travel. There would be many to guide him. His step was strong and his heart numb and his eyes clear. Occasionally, his hand went to the bandolier in which his cartridges were arranged in clips of threes. He had only a few, but each one he proposed to exchange for a dead German. His rifle was old, one built by Lebel in the previous century. It had seen much service, but loving hands had kept its bore shiny and its parts oiled. With it, Alexei's father had downed many Austrians and Bulgarians; Alexei, only the game he had stalked. When bullets are precious, men are careful shots, and Alexei always knew where his bullets were going.

The first night, Alexei did not have difficulty in finding shelter and food. He was a woodsman, and could live anywhere that had trees and game. The second night, however, he did not have to sleep beneath a lean-to of logs. He arrived at a village, and the first house he approached was his for the evening. As he went further westwards, he found more and more villages, and more and more people willing to accommodate a man who was on his way to Mihailovitch. There were girls, too, who looked at him with dark eyes, but none were Maria, and Alexei kept his conversation for the men, who told him of all that the Germans had done. And always there was the information of the guerrilla forces which Alexei desired.

He was warned of German patrols, which were more and more numerous as he followed the sun, and he heard for the first time of little guns that could shoot a thousand bullets a minute.

"Beware of them," he was told.

Alexei was politely bred, and did not contradict his hosts, but Alexei knew weapons, and none within his recollection could shoot a thousand bullets a minute, and he gave the same response he had for tales of tanks and planes and quick-firing cannon. "We will see," he would say, with the confidence of ability and youth, and look at his rifle. In one village, a woman whose husband had vanished with the army to the north, gave him a handful of cartridges for his Lebel, asking only that he kill a German in exchange for them.

And Alexei promised. One German among the hundreds he intended to kill would be a small fee for such a magnificent gift.

He came within the borders of Mihailovitch's domain. "You must be careful," he was warned by those who fed him. "Patrols are everywhere."

"I will be careful," he said.

And he was. But he couldn't see everywhere.

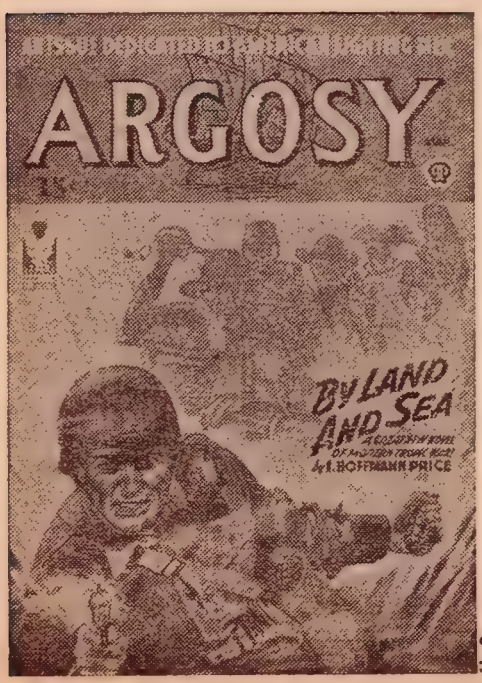
He was kneeling beside a group of

boulders, watching a file of soldiers creeping cautiously through a valley below him, when he first heard the little guns which could disgorge a thousand bullets a minute. Something hot pierced his left thigh. Too late had he twisted to look behind him. Less than six hundred yards away, eight helmeted soldiers had managed to surprise him. He was more ashamed of that than concerned about the hole in his leg.

He fell face down, and rolled limply onto his side, rifle flat on the ground. He caught his breath. Now he believed the wisdom of his elders; never had he believed guns could fire so quickly. The spray of dust about him subsided. He could not see back up the trail, but he could hear the shouts from the men who had wounded him. He waited to hear if they would be running, and heard no indication. Evidently the high altitude discouraged the Germans from any more exertion than they considered absolutely necessary. He rested to gain strength, eyes flicking around him. There was a rough line of large rocks a few yards behind him, which would make a crude sort of barricade.

Praying that the soldiers thought him dead, he struggled onto his good leg, scooped up his rifle, pivoted towards the rocks, and fell again, safe in a sanctuary of stone, just as the ripping machine gun fire began. The Germans were now only five hundred yards away. He flattened, while a whining flail scuffed through the dust and chipped the rocks.

THE firing ceased, and he rolled as far as he could to the limit of the rocks. There he looked at his leg. It was scarcely bleeding. He smiled as he fed a cartridge into the chamber of his Lebel, snapped off the safety, and rose on his good knee. Some soldiers were moving towards him; others stood off to one side, stubby guns ready. Alexei threw his rifle up to his shoulder, and swiftly sighted with the skill that had come from following bounding game. The submachine gunners raised their weapons a



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split second before Alexei killed his first man.

He dropped down ahead of the ripping fire, and was amused in the last glimpse he had of the Germans also going down onto their stomachs.

"That is better," he said to himself, and rolled to the middle of his barricade. Crouching at a small opening between two rocks, he was able to see two coal-scuttle helmets without exposing himself.

Careful not to extend his gun-muzzle where it could be detected, Alexei held his breath and squeezed off another shot, which was the signal for the German fusillade to recommence. He worked the bolt of his Lebel, and killed his third German.

His leg troubled him with a jab of pain, so, after feeding a clip to his rifle, he wound a scarf around the wound. Concern for his injury almost resulted in a greater one; his ears, trained for the slightest sounds, caught the movement of a body scuffing across rubble. One of the sub-machine gunners was patiently crawling onto Alexei's right flank, but the German wasn't as quick as the Yugoslav hunter. Alexei shot the German through the chest.

The fellow's little gun spurted through its magazine, as he threshed about. Compassionately, Alexei stopped the German's agonies.

"Five bullets," he counted, "and four Germans left."

He wormed over to the other side of his rock shelter, and grinned as a quick look over them brought only rifle shots. "No more little guns," he grunted with satisfaction. He tried to outguess the Germans; they would expect him to expose himself anywhere except at the last place he had raised his head. Therefore, that place was the position from which he killed his fifth German.

"Three left," he complimented himself, and put another clip into his gun. He looked off to the side where the German was now lying quietly. Alexei wasn't sure he approved of sub-machine guns; they used too many bullets. Still, he would like to try one. "And why not?" he asked.

Going a few yards to his right, he came to the opening through which he had previously been fortunate. He saw a German move, aimed calmly, and chided himself as the German kept moving.

He was about to fire again, when the German stopped crawling, and dropped his head. Thriftily, Alexei turned his attention to the other two. His sharp eyes were taxed to find them, until one shot at him, and he caught the motion of reloading.

Alexei smiled grimly, and killed another German.

"And only one left," he said. That one could be anywhere, and Alexei proposed to have an approximate idea. Hugging the ground, he inched forward to the rocks, and thrust his rifle barrel up as though it were accidental. He was startled to hear both a rifle shot and the chatter of a sub-machine gun.

Flat on his stomach, he reviewed the fight, adding up the Germans as he had shot at them. He was humiliated to think that he had made a mistake, but that was the only conclusion left to him. Returning to the opening, he studied the limited field of vision. It seemed to him that his sixth German wasn't in precisely the same place, nor had he previously seen the fellow's face. Now he could.

Chiding himself for his carelessness, Alexei aimed at the face, and flushed with shame as the German, gurgling, struggled to his knees before crumpling inert.

AT THAT moment, the sub-machine gunner located Alexei's opening, and sprayed it with a long burst. Splinters of rock showered the Yugoslav. Never had Alexei felt such pain; he was blinded with his own blood. "Mother of God!" he breathed, lying on his side, away from the opening. Another torrent of splinters gouged him. He tore at his shirt for a bit of cloth. The rough material was like emery on his face, but he cleared his eyes.

"Mother of God!" he breathed, and crawled away from the opening. He heard steps, boot-heels against hard earth and rock. The German had cor-

rectly guessed that his shots had injured Alexei, and the German was boldly coming to make sure.

Alexei's hands and body were trembling; he was wet with perspiration from pain. He knew he had to act quickly, but his strength was draining like sand in an hourglass.

"Steady," he told himself. "Steady, now."

He braced himself to spring up, rifle ready.

The German was less than fifty feet away and waiting. Alexei could not throw his Lebel up before the German started shooting. Desperately, he fired from the hip, as bits of lead hit his side and spun him about. The German stopped firing, because the German had been less lucky than Alexei, and had a hole in his abdomen.

After what seemed a few moments, Alexei found that he was still alive. He could not see through the red which bathed his eyes. "Another bit of cloth," he said. He fumbled weakly at his shirt; his fingers did not have the power to tear, and he finally cleared his eyes by opening and closing them many times. The blue sky was above him. He tried to sit up and could not; it was Herculean even to turn over. Blinking his eyes, he saw the dead German who had tried to outflank him. It was hard for him to remember what had happened; his mind worked slowly against a wavy, black flood.

What had he been doing? No hunting trip had ever ended like this before. Images of his family and Maria then floated into his consciousness. And then Mihailovitch. He had to join Mihailovitch. What had happened? Why hadn't he found Mihailovitch as he had promised?

Then, gradually, he remembered. He had been watching soldiers in the valley—with that, he ceased trying to reconstruct what had happened, in preparation for what could still happen. They would have heard the gunfire and would come to investigate. He had to be ready for them. He tried to rise. His legs had little power in them. He could only crawl—but where?

Frantically, he looked about him, and saw the machine-gunner again. There was where he would go. He would crawl to the gun, load it, and annihilate the whole patrol from the valley before they could take cover. Then he would rest and go on to Mihailovitch. Smiling against pain, he started crawling.

He was still smiling, but motionless, when the patrol from the valley found him.

The officer in charge looked around Alexei's battlefield. "He wasn't much bigger than his rifle," he remarked. "Too bad we don't know his name. Bury him."

And then the officer abandoned sentiment for the practical things of war, having his men gather up the German equipment, because Mihailovitch was short of sub-machine guns.

I got a little sick watching that Jap dance.

The Dutchman, the Dyak and the Jap

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

"THIS will not be a nice war," said Jan Kromhout, the big Dutch naturalist, after listening to the radio report of the attack on Pearl Harbor. "I mean it will not be pretty. *Neen!* Those Japs are bad. I could tell you some things about them that you might find it hard to believe."

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

Kromhout filled his meerschaum and lay back in his chair on the veranda of the *Hôtel des Indes*. The Dutchman had a curious habit. He would make a remark that suggested a story and then wait to see if the curiosity of the listener was stirred. If the person addressed had a desire to hear the tale he had to express that desire by complete silence. If he spoke of other matters the story never came.

Five minutes passed, ten. The city of Batavia was silent. The only sound that came to us was the slur of bare feet on the Molenvliet. Kromhout took a pull at a glass of schnapps that rested in the arm support of the big teakwood chair, wiped his lips and accepted my unuttered invitation.

"I WAS trapping on the Samarahan River in Borneo in the spring of 1938," he began. "It is a lost country. Seven miles from my camp was the bungalow of a Jap named Matsui. He called himself an anthropologist. He was from the University of Tokyo and he thought he knew a lot.

"He was a queer fellow. He was small, very small, but his hands were strong and hairy. They were much like the hands of the *mias*, the big orang-utan of Borneo. And his ears were funny. There is a lot of knowledge to be got from a man's ears. Our ears tell most everything about us.

"Do you feel cold when you come suddenly on a snake? *Ja?* Well, every time I met that Jap I was cold like that. It was strange. If I met him on a jungle path on the hottest day I would be suddenly cold.

"I asked myself why but I could not get an answer. Yet I knew there was an answer. There was something about that Jap that made me pretty sure my ancestors had a grudge against him in the years gone by. A very big grudge. It is the wisdom of our ancestors that breeds love or hate. They look through our eyes and see the fellows that we meet and they whisper *Ja* or *Neen* as the case may be.

"My mind could not find the reason why that Jap made me feel cold. It was a reason that was too far back in the memory list. I mean the list that had been handed down to me by my father and grandfather and great-grandfather and which they had collected for years. I had played tricks with that list. I had piled on it all the fool stuff that we call civilization. The stuff that smothers our fine animal instincts. Art and history and politics and literature. *Ja*, those things that are worthless.

"I was very good at history when I was a boy. I won prizes because I knew by heart the lives of the Dukes of Guelder and the Counts of Holland and all the stories of Tromp and De Ruyter. I did not know when I was learning that stuff that I was injuring my brain by covering over the fine animal traits that had come down to me through the centuries. I did not.

"In the hot nights on the Samarahan when the only noise was the roar of a mugger in the river I would catch a glimpse of that answer as it flashed for an instant through the heap of nonsense I had laid upon it. Just for an instant it seemed plain, then it fled before I could clutch it. And I thought it laughed at me. *Ja*, I did. Do you know why? Because it was the Old Wisdom that I had thrown aside for the New.

"This Jap, Matsui, spoke very little. He told me that he had come to Borneo to study animals, not to trap them. My business and his were altogether different. I was trapping the *mias*, the big orang-utan, which he was studying. He did not like me for that.

"I had three Dyak hunters helping me. Those Dyaks did not like the Jap. They would chatter like parrakeets when he came near. They were afraid. Do you know why? Because, although he was as much of an animal as the Dyaks, he had gathered up all the tricks of this thing we call Civilization without losing his animal knowledge. Do you understand? He was the Dyaks and me combined. He was the Past and the Present.

"To the Dyaks I was just a silly Dutchman collecting animals to send to Amsterdam for fools to stare at in zoological gardens on Sundays and holidays. That was a business that was brought about by civilization and I was

a civilized person. But this Jap, Matsui, knew all that I knew and with that he had the cunning and deviltry of a black panther. That is why I say that this will not be a nice war.

"That Jap had come out of the husk of barbarism so lately that he remembered everything that he had left behind. He was the thing called a civilized savage, and there is great danger in those civilized savages. This civilization is a medicine that must be taken drop by drop. The Japanese have swallowed the bottle.

"ONE evening the youngest of my Dyak hunters came to my hut and squatted outside the door. I was busy and I did not take any notice of him. He sat without moving till a big yellow moon came up out of the jungle, then he made noises in his throat that made me look at him. I asked him what he wanted and he made signs that I should go with him into the jungle.

"I was tired and I asked the reason. He would say nothing. A Dyak can be very stubborn and sometimes he cannot express himself. He stood looking at me, and from his nearly naked body there came fear. A great fear. Not of me, *neen*, but fear of something that he wished to show me in the jungle.

"This young Dyak had once worked for Matsui. He had run away from the Jap because Matsui had got mad with him and had burned his back with a hot poker while the Dyak was asleep. You will hear of things like that as this war goes on.

"I picked up my rifle and motioned to the hunter to go ahead of me and he trotted off like a pleased child. He thought that I, being civilized, could solve the thing that was puzzling him. It is funny how we believe in those fool tricks that civilization brings to us. And our arrogance makes the savages believe that we are wiser.

"We followed a track that led into the heart of the jungle. The tree masses blocked out the light of the moon, but that Dyak could walk through the darkest night without stumbling. There are eyes in our toes, but we cover our toes with shoes—so that our feet are blind.

"We came to a clearing in that great stretch of trees. The Dyak dropped on his hunkers and motioned me to sit near him. The clearing was not more than forty feet across, and now that the moon had climbed a little its beams struck into the center of it. There was no grass because the trees kept out the sunlight. There is seldom any grass in a thick jungle. We were sitting on a bed of rotting leaves that might have been ten feet deep.

"I was trying to guess why the Dyak had brought me to this place but I could not think of a good reason. Twice I pushed him with my hand because I was a little tired of crouching there on the damp mold, but each time he made a sign that I should keep quiet. And that fear I spoke of was still on him. It came out from him and made me forget the cramp in my legs.

"We were there for an hour or more when I heard the sound of something big coming through the tree-tops. I knew before I saw the animal that it was a *mias* crashing along in a hurry, then the moon gave me a glimpse. It was a big female *mias* and I knew her! She had been wounded by a Dyak spear when she was young and she dragged her left hind leg. She was a very cunning animal. She had sprung my traps and made me mad.

"The Dyak thought that I might shoot her so he grabbed my hand and held it while he hissed words into my ear. I knew then that I had been brought to that clearing to see something pretty wonderful. I knew that. The fear that came out from the native struck into me. Into my blood and bones. It was a force that spoke to me, telling me to keep quiet and watch. All the power of my senses was in my eyes.

"The *mias* heaved herself from limb to limb till she was quite close to the clearing. At times we could not see her on account of the creeper masses, but, suddenly, she broke through the branches directly opposite to the spot where we were sitting. Broke through and peered at the clearing. The Dyak was leaning forward, his naked body tense. He was sifting the whispers of the night.

The great bulging night that roamed around us. And the way in which he listened made me believe that something fearful was going to happen with the coming of the *mias*. Something that would not be nice to God or man. I think that the night tore some of that silly stuff about the Dukes of Guelder from my mind to let me see scraps of the Old Wisdom. Things that I had never learned at school were streaming out of the back of my head where they had been stored in the subconscious.

"Then, silently, slipping forward like a phantom, a man appeared on the clearing! A man naked except for the *chawat* around his loins. You have guessed? *Ja,* it was the Jap, Matsui!

"HE HAD come noiselessly up a side trail and had sprung out of the bushes onto the cleared space. He had no weapons. *Neen!* There was but the loin-cloth on his muscular body. And he stripped well did that Jap. When he moved into the moonbeams I was surprised. He looked tough. Small but tough.

"Now I did not see that Jap glance at the spot where the *mias* was crouching in the tree, but he must have known that she was there. Yes, he must have.

"You wonder what that Jap did? I will tell you. He walked to the center of that open spot in the middle of the jungle and he commenced to dance. *He commenced to dance.*

"You will ask me what kind of a dance? I wish I could describe it as I saw it. It had no exact measure, no rhythm, but there was in it the very essence of primitive life. It was the base of all dances. It was the first swagger of the male that had ever come into the world!

"We say that a thing is barbaric. We say that something is not nice. We are throwing bricks at our forefathers when we say that. The barbaric things are what our ancestors did. We think we are clever because we have taken the punch out of many things and made them what we think is nice. We are foolish to think so. The animals and the birds have not made their business 'nice.' The cock pheasant struts in the manner that has come down to him through a thousand years and so do all the other living things, all except man. Man has made his dances clean! It makes me laugh.

"Sometimes that Jap would just walk. But it wasn't a walk. Do you understand what I mean? He would move softly and slowly across the clearing in what you might call a walk but in that jungle in the moonlight that walk had meanings. A million meanings.

"Once, years and years ago, I went home to Amsterdam on a visit. There was a Russian dancer at the theater. His name was Nijinsky. I had heard much of him, so I bought tickets for my sister and her husband and myself.

"It was a piece called *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune.* This Nijinsky, who took the part of a faun, sees some nymphs and he came close to look at them. The nymphs saw him and ran away, but one of them who was curious came back. Nijinsky danced with her, but she became afraid, and bolted, leaving her scarf behind.

"Nijinsky danced with that scarf. He made big business with it, fondling and pressing it to him as he danced. The audience sat and stared at him because he had switched them back into the past. When he finished they were gasping because his dance told them a little of what they had been once.

"That dance turned my sister sick. Her husband who was a cheese merchant was sick also. He was a fool. He called the dance barbaric.

"Well, I was a little sick watching that Jap dance. It was tougher than Nijinsky's. It was a little unclean. Why? Because that brown man was dancing for an animal! He had not looked up at that *mias* but I knew that he was dancing for her. For her and no one else.

"I dragged my eyes from the Jap and looked up at the orang-utan. She was watching the dancer with the same intentness as the Dyak and myself. Her round eyes glittered in the moonlight. And when she moved, to get a better view of him, her movements were stiff and unnatural because her *mias* brain was occupied solely in watching that fel-

low prance around the clearing. Her short neck was thrust out and she struck savagely at swaying branches that got in the way of her view.

"I had a desire to pray and that was unusual for me. Just a little prayer asking the Almighty to blast the pair of them from the earth. *Ja*, but in the back of my head was a hope that He would not do so till I had seen everything that was to be seen.

"THERE was a great silence as that Jap danced. There were no animal noises and that was curious. Very curious. No howls from the wah-wahs and no yelps from the lemurs and the other monkeys. I have wondered much about that silence. Did the things of the jungle know what was going to happen? Did they think the business of that prancing Jap was not right from their point of view? I would like to know.

"Always when there is a great silence in the jungle I think that something has happened or is going to happen. If a snake kills a bird every feathered thing for a mile around knows it and is silent till the fear wears off. They sense the tragedy, they smell it, they feel it with every feather of their bodies.

"For fifteen minutes or more that dance went on. I have seen all kinds of native dances in the Orient but I have never seen one like that which Matsui danced. Never. Have you ever heard a tune that you could translate into words? Well, that dance was translatable into words. Words that ran through my head and which I thought I understood, but I didn't. They were dead words. They had been buried too long under the fool stuff that I had sucked in through my ears and eyes and piled on top of them. They were the words of the Old Wisdom.

"I had drowned them with the history of the Netherlands and other places. With lying literature and the study of the silly pictures in the Ryks Museum. *Gott im Himmel!* What fools we are! I spent hours as a boy staring at those stupid pictures! My mother thought that I would be an artist. Me!

"Matsui stopped dancing and stood in the center of the clearing. Now his eyes were on the *mias*. She came slowly down the tree, moving stiff-armed and stiff-legged, till she reached the lowest limb. I could see her quite plainly. She looked startled, puzzled, much distressed. The orang-utan shows emotions in a very human way.

"She sat and looked at Matsui. I had never seen a *mias* come so close to a man. Never, and I have trapped animals for more than thirty years. In captivity the orang will make friends with his keeper because the keeper brings him his food and he knows he will starve if he does not get it, but in his wild state he can live off the durians and the mangosteens and thumb his nose to mankind. Yet here was a female *mias* squatting within three yards of that Jap and staring at him as if she was hypnotized!

"It was the *mias* who first commenced to chatter. She made funny little throaty noises, leaning toward Matsui as she made them. And that Jap chattered back to her. Not in his own tongue or in any other that I knew. It was not the speech of the Klings or the Dyaks or any of the Malay dialects. It was a queer hissing speech that was disturbing. Just as disturbing as the dance. For it was old, so very old. It awakened memories that were not nice. Not nice at all.

"The *mias* dropped from the limb to the ground. She was crouching near the butt of the tree. Matsui commenced to dance again. Now he moved toward her, then he retreated, his hands weaving out toward her as if challenging her to join with him in his prancing.

"Faster and faster he moved. I do not think I will ever see a dance like that Jap danced. It had something that I cannot describe. It lifted me out of myself. It sent me back through the centuries. I was not Jan Kromhout. I was something without a name. Something like the *mias*. I was so mad with that man that I reached for my rifle but the Dyak grabbed my hand and held it tight. That Dyak wished to see the end of that business.

"Matsui stopped with a suddenness that took my breath. It was like the wild jerk of a horse thrown on his

haunches. And with the silence and the veiled moon his trick was a little frightening. He was a statue. A statue of something not nice. Not what you would want to look at for a long time.

"That *mias* was his victim then. She was hypnotized. She made funny noises to show him that she was conquered. She crept toward him. She put out a hairy paw. Matsui took it. They disappeared down the path up which the Jap had come!

"It was minutes before I recovered myself. At last I stumbled to my feet. I looked at the Dyak. His mouth was open, his eyes wide with fear.

"We went back through the jungle without speaking. And the silence was greater than ever. No bird or animal made a noise. They had seen something or sensed something in the night that terrified them.

"IT WAS daylight when that young Dyak beat on the door of my bungalow. He was excited. He wished me to come quick and see what he had seen. I could not make sense from his shouts.

"I pulled on my clothes and went out to him. He started to run, screaming out to me to follow him. I was angry, but I knew that something was wrong, so I followed.

"He ran through a stretch of swampy ground where the leeches were so thick that they clung to you in hundreds as you passed. I cursed that Dyak. I called out to him to stop but he would not stop.

"He was heading up-river in the direction of the Jap's bungalow.

"We crossed a swinging bridge of rattan and ran along a trail, the Dyak leading me by twenty yards. In the darkest part of that trail we found the Jap, Matsui.

"He was dead and he had been killed in a way that did not make him look pretty. The killer must have been angry with him. Very angry.

" 'Who did it?' I asked the Dyak.

" 'The husband of the *mias*,' he whispered. 'He was watching her last night from one of the trees. That is why the jungle was silent. All the birds and animals knew there would be a killing.' "

JAN KROMHOUT refilled his meerschaum, lit it, then spoke softly. "I said that this civilization is a medicine that should be taken in drops," he said. "The vanity of the Jap has made him try to swallow a thousand-year dose in half a century. It has upset him. He does crazy things.... *Ja*, this will not be a nice war. I mean it will not be pretty."

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THE WAY OF A COSSACK

By JOE ABRAMS

THE silhouetted figure sitting astride the half-frozen horse on the crest of the hill made an excellent target. A less able marksman than Igor Schinkowsky could have felled the rider with a single shot. For Igor, the setting was perfect. He brought his musket slowly to his shoulder and sighted carefully. Ordinarily, his aim would have been briefer, less deliberate, but this was game not to be taken lightly.

A thousand thoughts went through the Russian's brain as he raised his rifle. With one pellet of lead Igor Schinkowsky would win his place among the immortals. So portentous were the possibilities that all time seemed to pause to watch, to await the outcome. The shot must be well aimed, well sped, and accompanied somehow with appropriate reverence.

Carefully, prayerfully, he exerted pressure on the trigger. Slowly, slowly, infinitely slowly he pulled the trigger back. And then . . . a crash, the clean explosive crack of gunpowder on a winter day. The bullet went toward its mark.

Whatever destiny it is that saves her favored few for other fates chose that infinitesimal fraction of time to intervene. The horse of the intended victim,

The General looked at him casually, then beckoned to one of the guards. "That man is to be shot," he said.

ILLUSTRATED BY SAMUEL CAHAN

frightened by the shadow of a falling leaf, reared, whinnying, and the bullet passed on, exactly where a moment before Napoleon Bonaparte's heart had been.

That was how Igor missed his chance for fame. It was a story he told his children many times during his declining years. It was a story which passed down to his children's children and to theirs. And that story was the proudest heritage of Igor Igorovitch, who was four generations removed from his almost-renowned Cossack forefather.

No one would have suspected that Igorovitch was descended from that doughty warrior who stemmed the Napoleonic tide in 1812. No one would have guessed that Igor's breast beat with the same fiery spirit which animated the Cossack hero. Certainly the military authorities had no way of knowing, or else they would have reconsidered their refusal to induct Igor into the armies of Russia.

That is not to say, however, that the military authorities were to blame. The regulations were quite clear on the point of height. They could hardly accept for military service a man who barely reached the five-foot mark. The tailors could not be expected to halt production of uniforms in order to equip Igor Igorovitch. The regulations were coldly indifferent to the fact that Igor's blood was the same stuff which ran hot in the veins of the man who missed immortality merely by the shadow of a falling leaf.

Perhaps we should mention that we have been too formal in discussing Igor. No one ever called him by his name, and it is doubtful if his friends and neighbors could have told you his name had you asked. Everyone called him the Bug. It was a fit name for the diminutive peasant, and since he exhibited no dislike for the title, we shall henceforth call him the Bug.

THERE were others on the collective farm whose real names had long been in disuse. For instance, there was the Elephant who was so named because of his enormous size, and because his mustaches, patterned after those of Stalin, had an unfortunate tendency to curl outward in the manner of tusks. Also there was the Doe, who was named for his shyness and timidity. And of course, we cannot omit mention of the Duchess. Some said she was actually descended from pre-revolution royalty, and perhaps it was so. But she was called the Duchess principally because of her poise, her regal bearing and her great beauty.

The Duchess might have become an actress in Leningrad had not the steel-helmeted invaders from the Reich moved in. The way it happened was quite sudden and unromantic. On Monday the affairs of the farm had progressed uneventfully. The Elephant had supervised the building of a wire fence, the Doe had milked the cows and attended to his other chores, the Bug had spent the day repairing the engine of a recalcitrant tractor, and the Duchess had taught the children of the community a little more about reading than they had known the day before.

In the evening they gathered in the community house to listen to the radio bulletins describing the progress of the war. The Nazis had suffered frightful losses, the announcer had said, and the battle was raging far to the west.

That was Monday night. On Tuesday morning the Germans arrived. It was unexpected, impossible, incredible, but nevertheless an accomplished fact. There was no opportunity for escape. One moment there was nothing in sight but miles of waving wheat. The next moment a great roar of motorcycles and the approach of an unopposed army bearing the jagged insignia of the swastika. They appeared from all sides after the motorcycles had passed. They sprang up like stalks of wheat.

The Russians were herded into the community house and brusquely told to remain there and speak no word until given further orders. Grim-faced youths with bayonet-pointed rifles stood guard.

The Bug eyed the guards reflectively, wondering what Igor Schinkowsky would have done in a similar situation. "He would have cracked their heads together," thought the Bug sadly. "But Igor was six feet two, and I am not quite five feet. I shall not crack their heads together."

Suddenly one of the soldiers snapped into stiff attention. "*Achtung!*" he cried. The other guards immediately adopted the same motionless posture.

The door opened, and General Leopold von Schenk came into the room. His eyes swept the scene quickly. "Russians," he said in thick broken Russian, "we have come to liberate you."

The captives said nothing.

The General spoke again. "No harm will come to any one of you," he said, "so long as you obey orders. You are now subjects of the Fuehrer. Your immediate duties will be to tend the wheat until it has ripened. You will then harvest it and store it in the granaries. After that it will be shipped by rail to the Reich." He paused once more to eye the silent farmers. There was no response, only an indifferent dull stare from the peasants.

"That is all for the present," said the General tersely. "You will find that we are not the beasts you have been led to believe. You will learn that we are liberal and kind, and that our only wish is to become your friends."

Ivan Zalanzky spat on the floor.

The General looked at him casually, then he beckoned to one of the guards. "That man is to be shot," he said. Once more his eyes swept the room, then he turned briskly on his heels and departed.

General Leopold von Schenk, by some unlucky fortune, chose that very locality in which to base his headquarters.

Throughout the succeeding months the Bug and his friends learned that the General was not to be trifled with. The peasants were forced to work the fields, while the none-too-gentle reminder of machine guns, which studded the farm, prodded them on. Woe unto the man who rested in the heat of the sun. Let the Russian show by word or deed that he was unwilling to cooperate fully with the "new order," and he was haled before the firing squad. Let him grumble that the food was inedible, and he would eat no more.

A few tried to escape through the German lines. Some succeeded, but the great majority failed miserably and were returned to the farm, not to work, but to provide an example.

And so the summer passed. The wheat ripened, was harvested, and stored in the granaries for shipment to the Reich. The Bug was sick at heart. All summer long he had labored in the fields under the watchful eye of his captors. Not once had he had the opportunity to show himself a worthy descendant of Igor Schinkowsky. Not once had he proved himself a Cossack.

One morning the Elephant passed nearby. He stooped to tighten his bootlaces. "Come to my room tonight," he said. The words were whispered, and his lips made no motion.

"Why?" asked the Bug, pretending to study a cloud in the sky.

"You will learn then," the Elephant whispered. "There are plans to be made."

The Bug continued to stare at the cloud. "I shall be there," he said. "One of the guards is looking at us. You had better go."

ONLY a small candle lighted the Elephant's room that night. The shades were securely drawn so that no ray of light might betray the presence of the conspirators. The light of the flickering candle cast long wavering shadows in the room, lending a particularly eerie tone to the meeting.

The group was a small one, consisting of the Elephant, the Doe, the Duchess and the Bug. The Elephant paced the room restlessly. "All through the summer," he said, "we have struggled and sweated for the enemy. We have cut the wheat and stored it in the granaries, while our comrades on other fronts were giving their lives to destroy these voracious beasts. Is it proper that we should remain supinely under the invader's heel? Is it right that we should give aid to the enemies of our country? In a few days thousands of bushels of wheat, which we have grown, will go to the mills of Germany where it will be made into bread to feed the enemy." He beat his fist into the palm of his other hand and faced his select audience angrily. "Must it be so?" he asked.

"Perhaps," said the Doe hesitantly, "we could wreck the train that carries the wheat."

The Elephant shook his head. "The railroad is too well guarded, and even if we succeeded, it would not destroy the wheat."

The Bug said, "If only there were some way we could assassinate von Schenk. My great-great grandfather would have killed him with his naked hands."

The Elephant paced the floor. "Killing the General would not destroy the wheat."

The Duchess rose from her chair. "Sit down, Elephant," she said. "While you have been thinking, I, a woman, have been acting."

The three men looked at her sharply, and the Bug could not help noticing how the candle light made shadows on her face and somehow made her dark eyes catch the glint of the flame.

The Duchess continued. "If you are going to destroy the works of your enemy," she said, "you must first discover the weakness of your enemy. If he has no weakness, you must create it for him."

"That is easily said," the Elephant protested. "But how is it to be done?"

"I have done it for you," said the Duchess. "I was the first to realize that von Schenk is a fool. In fact, the General is in love."

The Elephant faced her squarely. "With you?" he asked.

The Duchess nodded. "He wants to

marry me," she said. "At first his intentions were not quite so honorable, but when he learned that my father was a Czarist prince his Prussian conscience would not let him rest until he restored me to my rightful place."

"And what of your own feelings?" asked the Doe suspiciously. "Are you in love with the General?"

The Duchess glared at him. "He is an invader and a murderer," she said coldly. "Besides, he makes love very badly. It is only for Russia that I endure it."

The Bug nodded approvingly. The situation was romantic and dramatic, and the Duchess, as the heroine, was superb. But the Elephant was worried. "How are we to take advantage of this weakness?" he asked.

"With this," said the Duchess. Proudly she put her hands under the folds of her cloak and withdrew two long slender objects, each about ten inches in length. With an air of triumph she displayed the cylindrical prizes, then laid them carefully on the table.

The three men gazed at the mysterious pieces of metal questioningly, then turned their glances to her. "I am sure these are excellent tools for certain uses," said the Elephant, "but can you tell us what they are?"

The Duchess smiled superiorly. "Instruments of revenge," she said. "With these we shall destroy the wheat in the granaries."

"With these?"

"They are incendiary bombs. One of us must penetrate the circle of guards. He will hurl the sticks to the roof of the barn. Immediately there will be a great conflagration, the wheat will be burned, and the enemy will bake so much less bread."

"Excellent," said the Doe. "And how were you able to obtain such weapons?"

"The General is a fool. I asked to visit the arsenal."

The Bug stared at the cylinders which glowed evilly on the table. "It is a good plan," he said, "except for one small matter. How is one to pass the guards?"

The Duchess looked at each of the men in turn. "One of you must be brave," said the General's enchantress. "Whoever it is must be prepared to sacrifice his life, must be ready to endure tortures and yet utter no word which might betray his comrades. Which of you will it be?"

The Elephant shook his head regretfully. "I am so large," he complained, "the guards would easily detect me before I could perform the mission."

The Doe stared fascinatedly at the sticks. "It will be very dangerous," he said. "Why must it be a man? Why," he asked pointedly, "should it not be a woman?"

"Because," said the Duchess, "it must be done tomorrow night. And tomorrow night I have a rendezvous with the General. I shall detain him as long as possible in order to keep him from the scene."

The Bug sighed with resignation. "Very well," he said. "Igor Schinkowsky would not have hesitated, nor shall I. I am small and will not be readily seen by the guards. And I know how to keep my lips sealed."

He touched the bombs gingerly and then hid them under his coat. Then he drew himself up to his full height. At that moment one might have detected a certain resemblance between the Bug and his fearless ancestor. No one there could have known it, of course, but the Schinkowsky of other days used to throw his head back at just that angle, and his eyes used to flash in just the same manner.

"Tomorrow night," said the Bug dramatically, "the flame I start will reach so high into the sky that even the hearts of the angels will be warmed. If I give my life, it is for Russia!"

Even the Doe felt ashamed in the face of such self-sacrifice, and wished fervently that he had been cast in the same heroic mold.

THE next afternoon the Bug strolled nonchalantly in the general direction of the barn. A brisk wind swept across the fields from the north, and the Bug wrapped his fur coat more securely around him. Winter was coming. At regularly spaced intervals the guards walked to and fro, their rifles on their shoulders. They looked at the Bug sus-

piciously, and one of them uttered a guttural warning. The Bug stopped and stared at the barn.

Carefully he studied the surrounding terrain. His sharp eyes noted each tree, each hollow, each bush. He knew he must take advantage of every shadow, must make his diminutive body even smaller in order to pass the cordon. But that was for tonight.

Suddenly the Bug felt a hand on his shoulder. Startled, he turned and faced —General Leopold von Schenk.

He looked deep into the General's eyes but could detect no evidence that the officer was suspicious. "Russian," said the General loftily, "I have an errand for you."

The Bug waited and assumed an obsequious posture. "I want you to deliver a message to Tatania Kouporov. Do you know her?"

The Bug nodded. Who did not know Tatania Kouporov? Who did not know the Duchess?

The General fingered the envelope in his hand but hesitated before entrusting it to the Bug. "Are you able to read?" he asked.

"No, Gaspadyin. Of what value is an education to a peasant?"

"Very good. You will take this note immediately to Tatania Kouporov. Tell no one about this matter or it will go hard with you."

The Bug nodded. took the envelope, and walked hurriedly away. He did not, however, reach his destination. No sooner was he alone than he ripped the envelope open and quickly read the contents.

"Tchah!" cried the Bug. "The Duchess was right. He makes love abominably." He read further, then shrugged his shoulders in disgust. "It is not a love letter," he said, "it is a communiqué."

It must not be thought that the Bug's faculties for criticism were impaired by bias. For a reader who had become accustomed to such searing avowals of passion as those contained in the Russian versions of "Romeo and Juliet" and in "The Loves of Catherine the Great," the General's opus was lean fare indeed.

This note, wrote the General, *is to say that I shall not meet you tonight in the appointed place. I have had reliable word that a most powerful personage will visit headquarters, and diplomacy demands that I be present.*

In the meantime, let us not forget that above all we must be discreet. A liaison such as ours would be certain to arouse a scandal in the Reich. It would not do for a general officer of the Fuehrer's armies to be implicated in such an affair as ours.

In better days, however, no blame will accrue to us for our audacity. Rather will men say that we acted bravely in following the dictates of our hearts.

Leopold von Schenk.

It is well done. . . . There is no power that can save the barn and its wheat!

You will readily see why the Bug's literary sensibilities were so gravely shocked. A love letter should contain terms of endearment, vows of eternal troth, rhapsodies of joy and despair.

The Bug spat in contempt. Such a letter, he reflected, is not worth hurrying for. He put the note in the lining of his fur cap. "I shall deliver it later," he said. And then he added thoughtfully: "I wonder who the great personage can be?"

The Bug was not to remain in ignorance for long.

The night was moonless, and a strong wind swept down from the north, the preface of a Russian winter. The Bug thanked his lucky stars for the darkness. He crept forward stealthily, hardly daring to breathe, using every instinct, every intuition to blend with the shadows about him. The soughing of the wind was the only sound to be heard, that and the occasional hard crunch of leather heels on the cold-hardened earth as the sentries walked their posts.

Igor Schinkowsky, wherever he was, must have swelled with pride at the manner in which the Bug cleverly took advantage of the topography. Igor, if he had been watching, must have taken a healthy swig of heavenly vodka, wiped his lips with the back of his hand, and spoken to the bearded angel standing next to him.

"Do you see that shadow moving in the hollow? That is my great-great-grandson. He is my worthy successor. See, how he creeps closer and closer to the barn. Notice how he pauses in order to avoid the guard. Do you note how he masks his face with his gloved hand in order to prevent the whiteness of his skin from showing in the darkness?

"Do you observe how he puts his hand beneath his coat and draws forth the deadly stick? See how he draws his arm back. Now he throws it. There! You see! The stick has landed on the roof of the barn. It sputters for a moment, and then it catches. The wind spreads the flames, and now the little ripples of fire are growing into a river, into a torrent. It is well done. There is no power that can save the barn and its wheat!

"But wait!" Igor the Cossack would have said had he been watching. "The guards are rushing to the scene. Look! They have detected the Bug. Run, Bug, run! It is too late. They have seized him."

THE guards were none too gentle with the Bug as they haled him into the presence of General von Schenk. The General regarded the criminal with cold, hard contempt. He listened patiently as the guards stammered their explanations of what had occurred, being careful to tell the story so that only praise would be their award.

"Search him for weapons," the General interrupted them.

A hasty search revealed one unused "Made-in-Germany" incendiary bomb. The dull gray stick was laid on the table before the General. He picked it up and studied it intently.

"Where did you get this bomb?" he asked.

"I found it in the fields," lied the Bug.

"That is a lie! It was given to you by a conspirator!"

"I found it in the fields," said the Bug stubbornly.

"There are no such bombs in the fields. Only the arsenal could have yielded such a harvest, and only a traitor could have presented you with such a gift."

It was futile to deny the General's deduction, so the Bug remained silent, staring at the floor.

Suddenly an open hand struck his cheek. "Pig!" screamed the General. "Give me the name of the traitor!"

The Bug looked up into the face of the German officer. The General's eyes were red with anger, and his cheek muscles worked furiously.

"Do you know the punishment for saboteurs?" shouted the General. "Do you know what will happen to you?"

"Perhaps you will kill me. I do not care."

Von Schenk's face flushed and paled in turn. "Fool! Insect! Before we have finished with you you will pray for death. Now tell me, who are your friends?"

"I am a fool and an insect," said the Bug humbly. "How can such a one have friends?"

The General spoke curtly to the guards, waving his hand in dismissal. They turned obediently on their heels, and left the room. The General adjust-

ed his collar and brushed a thread from his sleeve. With a great effort he contorted his face into what might conceivably have been taken for a smile.

"Now, Russian," he said cajolingly, "let us have no more of this idiocy. If you will tell me the names of your conspirators no harm will come to you. On the contrary, you shall have a handsome reward."

"I have had my reward," said the Bug in a tone which would have delighted his ancestor. "The wheat has been destroyed."

"Imbecile! Maniac!" shouted the General. "Do you think you are brave enough to endure the Gestapo course of treatment? Do you think you can endure to have your bones broken, one by one? We have ways of making criminals talk."

The Bug closed his eyes and pictured himself on the rack. In his imagination he saw the intolerable, exquisite torture applied to his body, and felt the horrible pain which the Nazis knew so well how to inflict. "I shall not speak," he said determinedly. "You shall never make me speak."

Von Schenk looked at him sharply. "We shall see how well your heroism wears."

Suddenly the roar of a motor was heard, the screeching of brakes, and the muffled distant sound of shouted commands. A knock sounded on the door.

"Come in," said von Schenk.

A sentry opened the door and stood at stiff attention. "He has come," the sentry announced.

"Why do you make mysteries?" asked the General in exasperation. "Who has come?"

The sentry hardly breathed. His eyes stared glassily at a point on the opposite wall. "The Fuehrer!" he said.

The blood drained from von Schenk's face. "The Fuehrer himself? Here?"

The sentry turned briskly and left the doorway. The General paced the floor worriedly, then faced the Bug. "I, who was charged with the express mission of delivering the wheat to the Reich," he breathed with hatred in his voice, "have failed because of you. Russian, you will suffer for this!"

THE sound of many "Heils!" from the corridor. The click of hard leather heels became louder as they approached the General's room. Von Schenk drew himself to a posture of attention.

Suddenly his hand shot out straight before him, his palm outstretched. "Heil Hitler!" he said hoarsely.

The Fuehrer had arrived. It seemed that a great electric tension accompanied him. Nervous energy radiated from his presence. His eyes darted here and there, his body moved impatiently, as though frustrated by the physical limitations of being confined to one place at one time.

"Who is this?" he asked curtly, indicating the Bug.

"A saboteur, Your Excellency."

"Let him be shot." The Fuehrer walked to the window and looked outside. "Winter comes early in the steppes," he said moodily, apropos of nothing, then looked at the Bug once more.

"What has he done?"

The General's voice was low and servile. He explained the nature of the crime to the Reichschancellor, telling how he had taken every precaution for the safety of the wheat. He showed his leader the unused incendiary bomb.

"And where do you keep such bombs?" asked the little mustached man.

"Locked in the arsenal, Your Excellency. No one could have had access to them, except—"

"A conspirator," said the Fuehrer, coming to the point at once. "We must learn who the conspirator was."

"The fiend refuses to talk."

"He must be made to talk!"

"I have threatened torture, and I have offered him clemency. Still he refuses."

"There is another way," said the Fuehrer impatiently. "It is a method we have used successfully throughout Europe." He walked slowly toward the Bug. "Do you understand German?" he asked.

The Bug nodded. "A little."

"Good," said the Fuehrer expressionlessly. "Tell me, how many Russians do you suppose there are in this community?"

Von Schenk interrupted him. "There are ninety-seven," he said.

"Silence! I was speaking to the Russian."

"Ninety-seven," said the Bug flatly.

The inquisitor stared intently into the Bug's eyes. "Then," he said, "ninety-seven Russians will be stood at the wall and shot, and you among them!"

"But that is unjust," the Bug protested. "They are innocent."

"It is no matter. That is one alternative. The other is confession. Would it not be better if you were to divulge the names of your conspirators so that only the guilty would be punished?"

The Bug nodded slowly, thoughtfully.

"Furthermore," said the Fuehrer, "your life will be spared. We know you are only a tool, blindly obeying the orders of your superiors."

The Bug shuffled uneasily.

"Very well," he said slowly. "I had sworn myself to secrecy, but I have no alternative. I must speak."

"Good," said the Fuehrer, "good!" He fairly beamed. "Now tell me, who are the conspirators?"

The Bug's voice was sad, and his body relaxed hopelessly like that of a broken man. "There is but one conspirator," he said. "He lured me into the deed with promises and false ideals."

"His name!" demanded the Fuehrer. "What is his name?"

The Bug looked imploringly to the ceiling, then cast his eyes to the floor. "His name," he said reluctantly, as if each word was torn from his throat by force, "his name is Leopold von Schenk."

"General von Schenk!" cried the Fuehrer in amazement. "Impossible!"

THE General reacted as though a lightning bolt had bored into the back of his neck. He sprang forward and confronted the cowering Bug. "What nonsense are you talking?" he screamed. "What ridiculous story are you concocting?"

The Fuehrer stood thoughtfully surveying the two men. "Be quiet, von Schenk! Do you think I would take the Russian's word above that of a German officer . . . without convincing proof?"

The General glared at the Bug, but subsided somewhat, mollified by his leader's assurances.

"Now Russian, what is your proof?" continued the Fuehrer.

"The bomb," said the Bug pointing to the gray stick on the table. "Who else but the General has keys to the arsenal?"

"It is not convincing. Give me further proof, and if we discover that you have lied, no power in heaven or earth will save you."

The Bug looked hurt. "How should I dare to lie to the Fuehrer of the world?" he asked. "The General is a traitor, and he cannot deny it."

Von Schenk could contain himself no longer. "I deny every word," he shouted. "I have had nothing to do with this scoundrel!"

The Bug looked up at the General with reproving eyes. "Then I shall give proof. Do you deny that you were to meet me at a secret place tonight, but that at the last moment the expected arrival of an important personage made you break your appointment?"

"Yes! I do deny it!"

"Do you deny that you said I must be discreet, that a liaison such as ours would cause a scandal in the Reich?"

"I deny that too!"

"Do you deny that you told me in the future men would say we acted bravely in following the dictates of our hearts?"

"I deny it!"

The Bug turned to the Fuehrer. "He has convicted himself by his own words," he said dramatically. He removed the hat from his head and took the envelope from the lining. Grandly he offered it to the Fuehrer.

The Reichschancellor read the note quickly, then turned to von Schenk, his eyes cold and merciless. "The Russian has done Germany a great service," he said. "It is convincing proof!"

Outside in the clear air, and free once more, the Bug looked inquiringly toward the sky. And who can say that Igor Schinkowsky did not indicate, perhaps by the smiling twinkle of a star, that the five-foot Bug had proved himself a Cossack.

BATON IN HIS KNAPSACK

By BEN T. YOUNG

STOAKES wasn't in the ward where I woke up after they'd dug the slugs from my insides, nor did the nurses know about such a guy. Captain Eastman, they said, was doing nicely, but Stoakes— All I could do was lie there and wonder, till Grady limped in on crutches. "Stoakes?" I asked him. "Is Stoakes dead?"

As company clerk I'd known Bill Stoakes from the time he joined us, a lanky redhead off an Arizona ranch. Cavalry? You would think so. His dad had been with the Sixth in '18, but they'd told Bill at the recruiting office that horse soldiers would likely stay on the Border, and Bill craved foreign service.

He'd been to high school and was sharp as a bayonet about the stuff in books but, it seemed like then, with no knack for soldiering. Like most westerners he was a lone wolf used to thinking for himself and sounding off when he felt like it.

As a result he was in immediate trouble, getting extra K. P. (he called it squaw work) for wearing a bandanna tied ranch fashion around his neck; extra fatigue for hanging the tag of his tobacco sack, another cowboy trick, out of his shirt pocket.

"Why'd you join the Army?" I asked him one day while in the kitchen getting the mess sergeant's O. K. on a ration return.

Bill looked up from the onions he was slicing. "Because," he told me, his eyes streaming water, "a soldier's what I aim to be." Then he went to repeating some lingo he'd learned from a history book,

something Napoleon had said about there maybe was a baton in his knapsack.

Kettlebelly Smith, the mess sergeant, loosed a whoop like an air-raid siren. "Haw!" he snorted. "Have somethin' not regulation in your pack come Sat'day inspection and Grady will demonstrate how come he's got the reputation for bein' the hardest-boiled topkick this side Fort Huachuca."

"A hard-boiled egg's always yellow inside," Stoakes drawled, which gives you an idea. Just an easy breezy western kid afraid of nothing on this earth. We couldn't down him, couldn't keep him in his place; and he was rapidly getting under Captain Eastman's hide.

THE first time Stoakes drew a guard tour was, I guess, the real start of his career. As bad luck would have it, his relief was off post and in the guardroom when the C. O. showed up during his morning ride about the reservation. "Turn out the Guard!" Number One sang out. "Commandin' Officer!"

Reining up his mettlesome thoroughbred mare, the C. O. sat waiting to take the compliment; and at inspection arms Stoakes loosed a shot up into the blue which started the mare away from there *pronto,* all but spilling her high-ranking cargo into the mud.

"Sure I know what the corporal told me about unloading my piece," Stoakes grinned when the fit-to-be-tied sergeant crawled him, "but down Tombstone way where I came from we always keep our guns loaded, and—"

Well, the summary court found him guilty of carelessly discharging a firearm, and fined him two thirds of his pay for three months.

"Shucks," Stoakes said. "If the boss would teach that spooky little ol' bronc to stand gun-fire, and get himself a good workin' saddle instead of that flat dude outfit—"

They choked him off, then; and Captain Eastman was confined to camp till he could discipline his outfit. "Keep that Yahoo out of my sight!" he told Top Sergeant Grady. "I don't want to hear of him any more, ever!" But it wasn't a week till Stoakes was on the carpet again, for losing his cap in a creek.

"Wind took her like a little ol' tumbleweed," he explained cheerfully.

Sighing, the captain turned to me. "Have the supply sergeant issue a new one," he said, "and deduct the cost from Stoakes' pay."

Stoakes grinned. "What with the fine y'all slapped on me, and the allotment to my mother, I've got no jack comin' till fall."

The captain looked at me. "He's right, sir," I said.

"But how in— He's *got* to pay for that cap!"

Stoakes' grin widened. "Y'all might promote me," he suggested. "A private first class gets more *dinero.*"

Grady nearly exploded but the captain, seeing no other out, told me to type the necessary order.

"It all goes to show," Stoakes said, "you never can tell which way a dill pickle's a-goin' to squirt. If I hadn't kept my .30 gun loaded at the calaboose, I'd never have stampeded the boss-man's bronc and got fined; and if I hadn't got fined I could have paid for that little ol' stewpot cap without gettin' promoted. It all goes to show you—"

"Button your lip!" Grady roared. "You'll get busted soon's you're square with the Q. M. Drag out o' here."

Stoakes didn't drag. Paying Grady no attention he stood looking at the captain. "I won't be busted as long as I soldier good, will I?"

Disconsolately, the captain shook his head.

"Then I'll be a top hand or bust a tug tryin'." Stoakes tore out to have a chevron sewed on his sleeves.

Officers' Call sounded then, and when the captain returned from the daily conference at headquarters, he was glum as a dismounted cavalryman. "We've got to transfer some men," he announced to Grady and me, "to fill up an outfit going overseas. Let's have a look at the roster."

"Stoakes," Grady chuckled, "will head the list."

"No can do," the captain mourned. "The C. O. said no culls. We've got to send good men."

"We've just promoted Stoakes," I reminded him. "A private first class should be good enough."

"Right!" The captain grinned. "Put him on."

"It all goes to show," I said, slipping a sheet in my typewriter. "If he hadn't stampeded the C. O.'s mare and been fined, then promoted so he could pay for a cap he lost, he wouldn't have been good enough to—"

"Pipe down," the captain chuckled, looking happier than he had for weeks.

We got those transfers ready *pronto*, and as they route-stepped under full pack out of the company street, Mess Sergeant Smith leaned from a kitchen window. "Stoakes," he yelled. "Got that what-is-it in your knapsack?"

"Baton," Stoakes called back. "I got her. You watch."

WELL, after a time our outfit got sailing orders too, and landed you-know-where. The first day we got in action our company was taking an awful mauling from a machine gun; and before long those of us who weren't hit were hopelessly turned around in the fog blowing in off the ocean.

The captain and I dropped into a bomb crater to see if we couldn't get oriented. We could hear men milling about but couldn't see them for the swirling mist, and daren't call out for fear they might answer in the wrong language. Shortly, one came tumbling in with us. We jerked up our pistols but the guy let out a good old American "Howdy!"

"Stoakes!" the captain groaned.

"Sergeant Stoakes, sir," Bill corrected. "My outfit's yonder in reserve, and not bein' busy I thought I'd look you *hombres* up cause you'd sure be in some kind of a jackpot."

"But this fog!" the captain protested. "We can't see a—"

"Shucks," Stoakes laughed. "Back in Arizona we have these in the mountains all the time. Where y'all want to go?"

"Forward, of course. There's a machine gun—"

Stoakes unlimbered his pistol. "Come on," he ordered, scrambling from the crater on the side I'd have sworn was toward our lines. The captain thought so too, and said so; but Stoakes insisted, "Follow me tight," and went right on.

It was no place to stand and argue, so, leaning forward a little as a man will lean against a heavy rain, we kept abreast of him and not more than arm-length apart lest we get lost again. The air was full of snapping hissing things and some screaming. Through the murk we could see spurts of fire, and once I fell over something that squirmed and whimpered.

My courage was oozing like water through an old tent and I could see, by the way the captain kept fussing with the chin strap of his tin hat, that his was too; but Stoakes didn't seem to mind at all. "If it wasn't for that cannon-fire and the bombs," he yelled, "it would remind me of the time my dad tells about when old Pancho Villa's outfit shot up grandpa's ranch down near Agua Prieta. It was thick, just like—"

I wished he'd shut up and keep his mind on what he was doing, for I was sure he was headed in the wrong direction and the things we were walking into came from the muzzles of Brownings and Garands. What we wanted was that enemy machine gun, and—

After that, there was nothing more for a long time; not, in fact, till I came to in this hospital and lay wondering about Bill Stoakes.

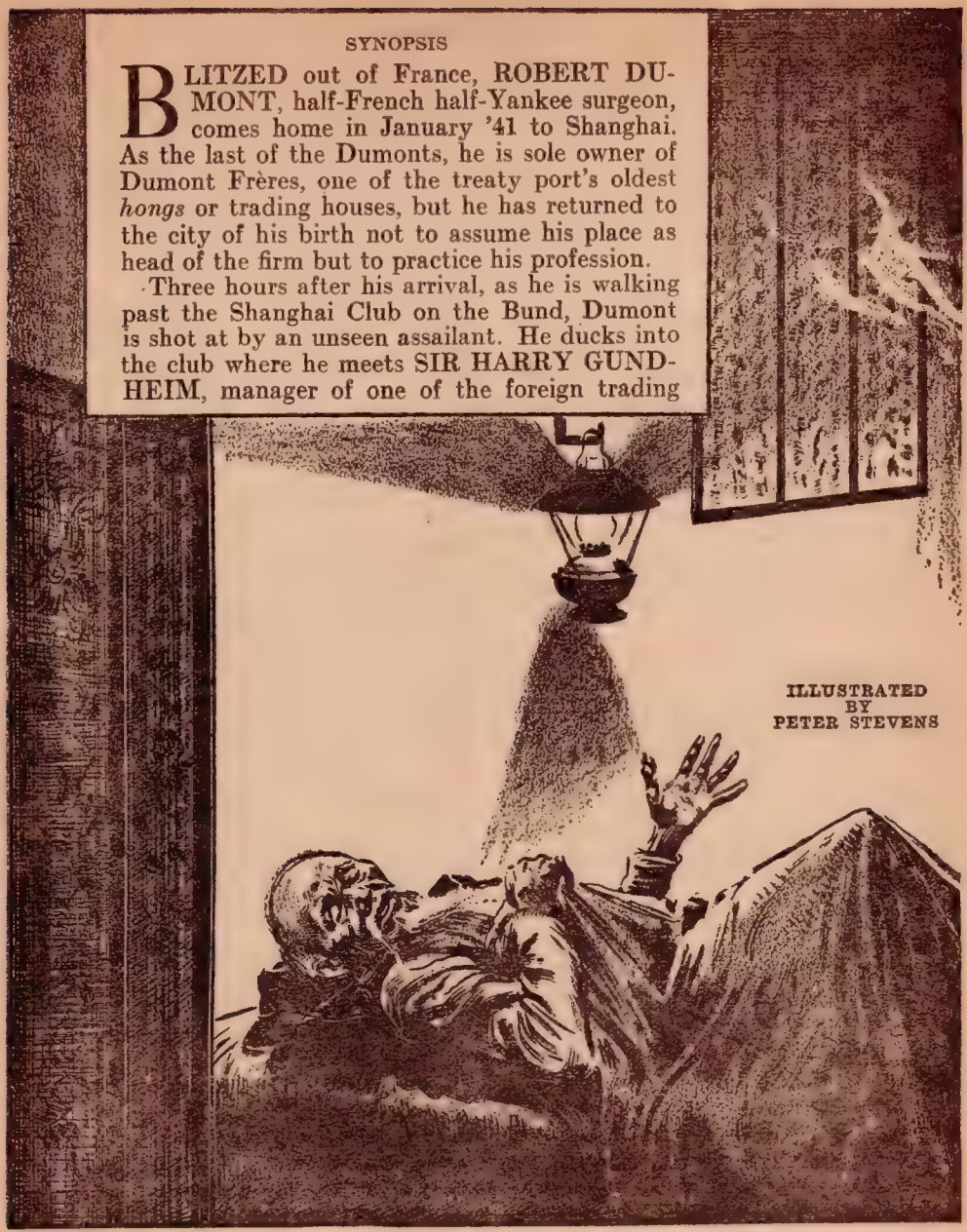
"Stoakes dead?" Sergeant Grady said, repeating my question as he sat down and scowled at his bandaged foot. "Stoakes ain't even scratched. After liquidatin' the crew of the gun that mowed you down he lugged the captain back, showed the medicos where you were, then guided the major right to our objective, shovin' them Axis apes right back on their tails. Stoakes gets a D. S. C., and the trainin' for a commission. We sure made a *soldado* out of that brash kid."

It hurt me to laugh but I didn't care, being glad for Stoakes, and proud and grateful. "We," I said, "had nothing to do with it. He's a born leader. Remember that baton in his knapsack."

SYNOPSIS

BLITZED out of France, ROBERT DUMONT, half-French half-Yankee surgeon, comes home in January '41 to Shanghai. As the last of the Dumonts, he is sole owner of Dumont Frères, one of the treaty port's oldest *hongs* or trading houses, but he has returned to the city of his birth not to assume his place as head of the firm but to practice his profession.

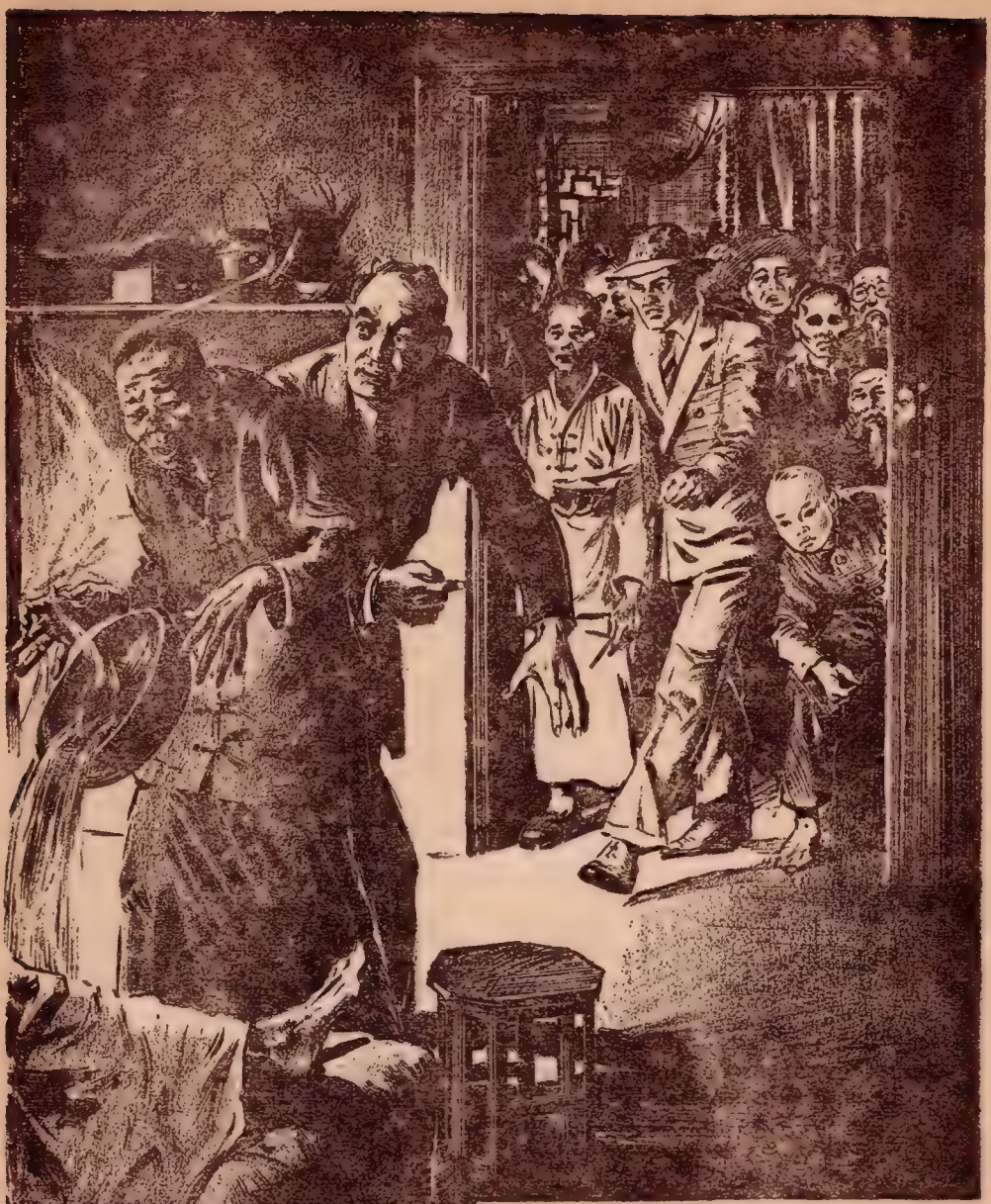
Three hours after his arrival, as he is walking past the Shanghai Club on the Bund, Dumont is shot at by an unseen assailant. He ducks into the club where he meets SIR HARRY GUNDHEIM, manager of one of the foreign trading



ILLUSTRATED BY PETER STEVENS

Shanghai Post-Mortem

By ERNEST O. HAUSER



With a clumsy nudge of his elbow he upset the bowl.

firms which are still doing business in Shanghai under the Japanese occupation. Gundheim introduces Dumont to several of his fellow *taipans* lined up along the "longest bar in the world"—among them an American, JOHN MATTHEWS of the Orient Bank. When Dumont's name is spoken, a ferocious old man rolls over in his wheelchair to confront the doctor. He is MR. KURTZ, manager for many years of

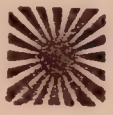
Dumont Frères. Kurtz angrily accuses Dumont of returning unexpectedly to Shanghai to check up on his handling of the firm's affairs—and hints his suspicion that Dumont has been sent by PERCY TONG, mysterious head of a group which is smuggling supplies to the Chinese. Dumont denies Kurtz' accusations and leaves the club with Matthews. Outside he meets the American's daughter, PATRICIA, who has refused to be evacuated despite the danger of remaining in Shanghai.

A few evenings later, Dumont returns to his hotel to find a Japanese visitor—COMMANDER Y. OMURA of "Publicity and Press Relations." Omura suggests smoothly that it would be wise for the doctor to busy himself with the affairs of the Dumont firm. Dumont accepts Omura's warning noncommittally. Next day he goes to the offices of Dumont Frères to see Kurtz, who, apparently expecting cooperation, reveals that he has been playing both ends against the middle—delivering supplies to Percy Tong for the Chinese, and then tipping off the Japs as to their location. Furious, Dumont dismisses Kurtz and decides to carry on the firm's affairs himself.

Patricia Matthews has dinner with BILL MacCRAE, an agent of Tong. The Scot tells her that Tong has marked three foreigners for death for cooperating with the Jap "New Order." Two of them are already dead; the third is her father. Tong wants Patricia to perform a mission—the price of her father's life. Tong has learned that Gundheim is seeking a loan of a hundred million pounds from the British Treasury. The money, ostensibly for the Chinese, will actually go to the Japs, although not even the man in London who is negotiating the loan for Sir Harry, is aware of this. Pat is to search Gundheim's offices for the name of this man.

One morning soon after, Dumont rises early to meet a Dutch freighter with cargo consigned to Dumont Frères—the *City of Utrecht*. When he enters the motor launch which is to take him to the mouth of the Yangtze where he will board the freighter, he finds Patricia Matthews waiting in the cabin. She insists on going along to "protect" him. Dumont laughs—but as they approach the Dutch ship he sees a familiar figure watching them from the foot of the accommodation ladder—Commander Omura. Dumont demands to see the captain but Omura "regrets" that it is impossible. The *City of Utrecht*, the Jap says, is carrying contraband and has been made a prize of war—to be sent to Nagasaki.

PART II



PATRICIA saw Robert's hands grip the rail and she saw that the knuckles were white. But his reply came calm and businesslike. "This is a neutral ship," he said. "You cannot do this, Omura. Once the cargo is loaded on Chinese junks, that's a different matter."

Omura seemed amused. His voice was condescending like the voice of a teacher explaining for the third time a simple problem of arithmetic. "You are right, this is a neutral ship. According to the principles laid down in the Hague Convention of 1907 and the London Conference of 1909, a belligerent may seize a neutral ship if it carries contraband intended for the enemy. He may put a prize crew aboard and take her into his own port where a prize court adjudicates her status. Do I really have to tell you what is in the hold of this ship? I think you know as well as I do."

Evidently Omura had read up on his international law and there was little point in arguing with him. Robert's silence acknowledged defeat. But then, to his surprise, Patricia Matthews entered the discussion.

"You only have a right to take a neutral ship, Commander," she said, "if the contraband on it runs to more than fifty per cent of the cargo. I wouldn't be too sure if I were you."

Omura's amusement grew. "The firm's legal expert? I can answer that one, Miss Matthews. The *City of Utrecht* will hold four thousand five hundred tons of cargo. The trench mortars alone weigh more than three thousand tons. And there are seventy-five airplane engines

at thirteen hundred pounds each. Both items, of course, are on the absolute contraband list. Then there are sound detectors . . ."

"He's right," said Robert, "but thanks, Pat, anyway."

Robert was familiar enough with the unwritten code of the East to know that the continuation of an argument beyond the point of defeat meant a disastrous and utterly irreparable loss of face. He turned to tell his pilot to start the engine for home.

But Omura, with a sudden asperity in his voice, spoke to Patricia. "You are American, aren't you, Miss Matthews?" he said.

"Yes, I am."

"So am I. Always glad to meet a countryman. I was born in Salinas, California. Went to school at U.S.C. Sometimes had to explain that my name wasn't Irish. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha," said Patricia calmly.

"In fact," Omura continued, ignoring the interruption, "I only let my American citizenship drop last year because of political complications. You've got to draw a line somewhere."

"I guess you've got to."

"What I mean to tell you," said Omura, and his voice rose sharply, "as one American to another, is that we have been watching you, Miss Matthews, for some time. I wouldn't leave the Settlement, if I were you, for pleasure trips around the harbor like this. Next time they might not be so pleasant."

Omura turned on his heel, but before his foot touched the steps of the ladder, he called back: "This is your second warning, Doctor. There'll be no third."

As the launch—come to life again with the sound of its motor—began to glide away from the Dutchman, Robert and Patricia gazed back. The weather had cleared and the clouded sky put metallic lights on the water. They heard the winding of the anchor chain and saw the heavy anchor go up on the ship's bow. The wisp of smoke over her funnel became a black streamer. High on her mast there rose the flag with the rising sun.

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CHAPTER V

MAN OVERBOARD

AS the *City of Utrecht* began to slip downstream, they saw a dark object detach itself from her stern and plunge into the yellow churn of her wake. The object looked like the body of a man.

Apparently the prize crew on the *Utrecht* had not noticed the incident. The freighter was proceeding on her course.

Robert shouted to his pilot to swing the launch around. They quickly approached the point where the body had dropped.

Dumont unhooked the two life-preservers from their places on the outside wall of the cabin. The launch had entered the wake of the freighter and was cruising in slow circles, three pairs of eyes now scanning the dark ochre surface of the water. They had circled several times when Patricia spied a bobbing head. It was red-haired and it was drifting fast. The body under it, no doubt, had given up fighting the mighty current. But when the life-preservers splashed into the water near it, a hand reached out to grab one of them and managed to hold on.

They hauled the man aboard. He was about forty, of stocky build, with large ears and a rather stubby nose. His blue serge suit, soaking wet and bedraggled though it was, showed signs of being well tailored. Dumont and the pilot had to support him by his shoulders as they pulled him up on the little deck. The man stood there with something like a grin on his chubby face, giving the impression, for a second, that he would be able to move under his own power. But when Robert and the Chinese withdrew their support, he collapsed.

They carried him into the cabin and, while the launch resumed its course, Dumont began to administer artificial respiration. He compressed his ribs, throwing all his weight onto the fleshy torso, and releasing the pressure abruptly. He repeated the process for some time until a trickle of water ran from the man's mouth.

"He'll come around," he said to Patricia without looking up. "There might be some brandy in the cupboard."

Patricia found the bottle. Robert had removed the man's coat, torn off his shirt and the thick knitted undershirt, and now he rubbed the muscular back with a woolen blanket until the skin was red. No more water came from his mouth. He gave a groan. Robert turned his heavy body and massaged the hairy chest. Patricia lifted the man's head and they poured some brandy into him. There was another groan and the man blinked his eyes.

"He'll be all right, if he doesn't catch pneumonia. You'd better go up on deck," said Robert. "I've got to take his pants off."

He gave the man a final rubdown, then put his own overcoat on him and wrapped the blanket around his shoulders. He lifted him upright and sat him on the bench. He gave him some more brandy and the man swallowed like a docile child. Then he vomited.

After this he was well enough to be embarrassed. He mumbled something that sounded like an apology. Then, suddenly, he stared at Robert with round eyes.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked, in English.

"To Shanghai," said Robert, "if that's all right with you."

Dumont's answer seemed to give him tremendous relief. His face relaxed and he closed his eyes. When he opened them again they gazed at Robert with the intent appreciation of a faithful St. Bernard.

"My name is Van Baalen," he said. "Jan Van Baalen."

"How do you do," said Robert.

"Thank you, I am fine. That is, much better. They almost took me to Nagasaki." He shuddered and closed his eyes again. "Drowning would have been pleasanter—very much pleasanter."

Robert gave him another swig of brandy, and this time it stayed down. "You mind telling me why?" he asked.

"It is because of politics," said Jan Van Baalen, shaking his head. "They would have sent me back to Europe and there—" His eyes were wide as if with

surprise. "You have saved my life," he said. "I can trust you. I am from Rotterdam. I killed three soldiers who were in my drawing-room. They were officers —you see. It was a very nice house. I had not invited them." His big St. Bernard eyes looked steadily into Robert's face. "That's why I don't want to be sent back to Europe."

Robert returned his steady gaze. "You are safe now, Van Baalen. And don't exert yourself talking now. Better rest a while, and finish that bottle. It'll keep you warm."

IT was a bright morning when Dumont went back up on deck. The sky was of an even white that shaded off into a brownish gray toward the horizon. Ships of many types enlivened the winding river, large black transports of the enemy, a couple of American tankers, Chinese fishing junks—sturdy ocean-going craft, with bamboo-ribbed sails and two lucky eyes painted on the prow. Far in the distance, the ragged outline of the Bund thrust itself into the sky.

"How is your patient?" Patricia asked. She stood against the rail with her raincoat open and her brown hair tousled by the wind. Her face was clear and fresh and there was a warmth in her gray eyes that Robert had not seen before.

"It was nothing," he laughed. "He has the constitution of an ox. He was strong enough to tell me his life story."

"I think you would have made a good doctor, Dumont."

Robert ignored the seriousness in her tone. "You'll be surprised," he said, "what a good businessman I'll make."

He turned up the collar of his jacket and stood there, with his hands in his pockets, straining his eyes to make out the Dumont hong in the skyline of the Bund. But all he could see at this distance were some skyscrapers—Broadway Mansions, the Sassoon House, the new Bank of China—and the dome of the Hongkong Bank. He was annoyed.

"How ugly it all looks from here." Patricia followed his narrowed eyes. "And yet I believe it's the only town I could ever love."

"Yes, it is ugly," said Robert, "and different from what I expected to find. When I was a child I had a pretty little book with pictures of China—you know, pagodas and willow trees, and bald monks with umbrellas, and lotus flowers, and ghost bridges, and golden pavilions where people had tea. Perhaps that was the China I expected to find."

"Poor boy," she said. "That's the China at the end of the rainbow. . . . Perhaps you'll find it some day."

Robert looked into her eyes and found no trace of sarcasm in them. "Why do you love Shanghai?" he asked suddenly.

"It's hard to say," she said wistfully. "I guess it's because—no, it isn't because I was born there. You see, there was something grand about the way this city lived—from the muddy forties and the silken eighties to the crazy silver boom. There was something grand about this small family of white people making merry in the face of the—the dragons behind the Bund." Patricia smiled at the inadequacy of her language. "And I think there was something grand about the way it died. Yes," she ended on an abrupt note of conviction, "I love Shanghai because it doesn't know when it's licked."

Robert did not know whether it was the wind or her love for the great distant city that had brought moisture to her eyes. But he knew, as she stood there with her open raincoat, with her hair flying and her lips parted, that this had been the missing page in the picture book of his youth.

He laid his hands on her arms and kissed her mouth. He did it softly and deliberately and without impatience. There was no impetuosity in his embrace. It was, rather, quite easy and relaxed, after the tense hours of that morning—like the fulfilling of an old agreement. Her lips were warm on his, and the tranquillity of his mood was in her kiss also.

Robert looked at her, holding her firmly. He kissed her again, and she was quiet in his arms. Then, like a scudding cloud that crosses the sun, the old shadow was on her face—the shadow that he had seen that first morning in Shanghai, that had puzzled and pained him. It was something that made him think of

fear and that he was unable to fathom.

Robert was about to ask a question, but he was interrupted. The little Dutchman had had enough of the boredom of the cabin. Besides, he had emptied the bottle of brandy. He came up the steps, still wearing Robert's overcoat and the heavy woolen blanket. His face was ruddy and cheerful.

Patricia saw him first. "Hello," she said. "Feeling better?"

"Feeling fine," said Jan Van Baalen, stretching his arms. "Shanghai!" He looked at the white crescent of buildings that was the Bund. "What a beautiful city!"

They made good headway through the thickening traffic of the river and, after rounding the bend opposite Garden Bridge, turned into the home stretch. They were low on the lazy yellow water. The steel-gray warships that guarded the international waterfront, with their guns and turrets, towered above them.

The Dutchman's eyes scanned the fronts of the buildings, one by one, as they passed. "What a beautiful city!" he repeated.

"What are you going to do—in this beautiful city?" Dumont asked.

Jan Van Baalen shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. I had some letters of introduction but they stayed with my bag on the *Utrecht*." Apparently his predicament did not worry him much. "I guess I'll find some work," he said. "I have an old friend in this town. William MacRae, is his name. He might help me to a job."

Robert looked at him. "Perhaps I can give you a job," he said. "You see the house with the French flag? It's my hong. We could use a man like you."

But Jan Van Baalen shook his head. "This is my first trip to Shanghai," he said. "but I've been out East before. Batavia, three years. Balik Papan, two years and a half. And Singapore. No, sir. I know the East and I have learned a thing or two. If someone does you a big favor, don't ask him for little favors afterwards. You have saved my life, and that's enough."

The Chinese sampans cleared the approaches and the pilot moored the launch at the Dumont pier. Patricia set foot on it first. Robert expected her to wait while he helped Jan Van Baalen, who was struggling with his long overcoat. But when he looked up, Patricia had slipped away and was disappearing among the chanting coolies on the foreshore of the Quai de France.

IT was a bleak and gusty winter day and although there was still daylight in the streets, the lights were on in most of the windows. Patricia let her eyes slowly wander up the gray front of the Gundheim Building. In the lower floors she saw people get up, cover their typewriters, and put on their coats. Then she looked up to the top floor, the fifteenth. A single light shone up there! Harry Gundheim's office.

The girl felt uncomfortable. A cold wind came from the Whangpoo and she was shivering. Or was it, perhaps, her own tenseness that made her shiver? True, she had done jobs of this kind before. Ever since she had served as Percy's Tong's informer she had been faced with delicate situations. She had taken her afternoon tea in the lobby of the Palace to overhear what Mr. Ishii of Mitsui & Co. had to say of Mr. MacNeary of Hobart, Booth & Co. She had had her father invite the Eastern Oil taipan and his wife for dinner because there were some questions that she had to ask. She had stolen and copied invoices and obtained fairly complete intelligence on the movement of hot cargoes in and out of the port. And she had reported what she had seen and heard to William MacRae who forwarded the information to his patron—the mighty Percy Tong.

But this was different. Not that it was more dangerous than those previous assignments—although, as she looked up to that lone light on the fifteenth floor, she was inclined to agree with MacRae. If she should get caught up there, only Kuan Yin, the goddess of mercy, could get her out alive. No, it was not fear. It was, rather, the ignominy and meanness of her task, the fantastic manner in which she was disgracing herself.

Patricia was Shanghai born and bred.

Except for two or three brief trips home to the States, Shanghai was all she knew. She had absorbed the unwritten code of the small white ruling class of the treaty port, with its rigid do's and don't's, with its strictly colonial brand of morality. She had never questioned the dogma of the white man's sanctity. Now she was about to trespass. She had come, in this bleak winter afternoon, to betray a white man who was a pillar of this international community. She was breaking a tabu. And, what made it worse, Harry Gundheim was one of her father's oldest friends. She had known him well since her early childhood, and she had been to his house a thousand times.

There was a commotion in front of the building opposite. A large black car, driven by a Chinese chauffeur in white uniform, drew up to the curb: Harry Gundheim's car. Presently a towering figure became visible in the oblong entrance. From where she stood Patricia could not distinguish his face. But she saw, by the quickness of his step, by his great hurry to get into the waiting car, that Sir Harry was absorbed in important thoughts—too important, in fact, for him to acknowledge the respectful salute of his Sikh watchman.

What Patricia did next she did with all the ease and the complete detachment from the tyranny of matter that sometimes characterizes our movements in dreams. Breasting the traffic of Hankow Road, bribing the watchman with a smile and the elevator boy with a dollar bill ("There are certain things that only a woman can get away with," Bill MacRae had said), and stepping out on the hard cement floor of the fifteenth story. The click of her steps resounded from the walls of the hallway, but somehow the echo rang reassuring. It conveyed emptiness. There was nobody on the fifteenth floor.

Sir Harry's office was in excellent order. It was most encouraging. There were no piles and bundles of loose papers as she had seen in her father's office, that would have been agony to go through. This was clean and orderly and altogether streamlined. There was a modern desk with a chrome-steel frame with rows of drawers on either side. The chair, in the same style, was surprisingly light—it must have been to its tensile strength rather than to its mass that Sir Harry entrusted the weight of his huge body. There were more chairs, and some shelves with trade directories and bound volumes of the London *Economist*.

Patricia knew that old maps were Sir Harry's hobby, but she had not thought him so fond of them that he would keep a sizeable collection in the drawers of his desk. The first stage of her search was disappointing. There were fine specimens of early Dutch and Italian cartography, printed and engraved, richly colored and plain black-and-white. One, showing the medieval contours of the small town of Gundheim, held Patricia's interest for a few seconds. Then, in the two top drawers at the left, she found files of documents.

IT was a pity that Patricia had no professional training in this sort of thing. Her palms were moist and there was little method in her procedure. She would take out a batch of correspondence, remove the paper clip and read the notes and letters only to discover that this was not about the new loan at all, but about the old Chinese wheat loan, and she observed with dismay that she had wasted another precious minute.

Then the telephone rang. It rang out with a shrill burst of noise that was shocking in the silence of this room. It made Patricia's heart leap. She dropped the papers she held, cold with fear. She did not move as the shrillness rang out again and again. Her eyes mesmerized the little white phone on the desk in front of her, watching it as one watches the raised head of a poisonous snake. It was one of the two French telephones on Sir Harry's desk that had thus come to life. His private phone, no doubt. The other, which was black, had a more official look. While the white one shrieked, the black one remained dead and silent. Patricia laughed. It was idiotic to be frightened like this. . . . Abruptly the white phone stopped.

In the top drawer, Patricia found what she was looking for. These were

carbon copies of some two dozen radiograms that Sir Harry had sent off. They were on flimsy paper, and they rustled in Patricia's hands as she leafed through them in great haste. They told a story and the story was complete. It was a series of detailed instructions regarding a loan of one hundred million pounds sterling: interest and amortization, apportionment of the principal, assertions of its significance in cementing Britain's position in the East, pledges of secrecy. Patricia gathered that the Chinese beneficiaries of the loan were to use it to purchase ammunitions and supplies from a Shanghai syndicate under the auspices of Sir Harry. It was all here, right and real, and rustling in her hands. There was a date, too, on which Sir Harry expected the British Treasury to give the final word of approval: it was today.

But a sudden realization made Patricia sink down in Sir Harry's chair—the messages were dead! They were lifeless as so many corpses: there were no heads on them. Of what good would her knowledge be to Percy Tong if she could not give him the name of Sir Harry's London friend? This was her mission, to find the name. As she went through the file once more, with trembling fingers, she saw that the address was missing on every one of them.

Patricia leaned heavily on the desk, burying her head in her hands. She was exhausted. Her search, her whole prying mission in this room, was a failure. With blank exasperation she pictured MacRae receiving her report, telling her that she had failed him, that now all thought of her release was premature.

There was a paper on the top of the desk. Patricia idly gazed at it, her forehead still leaning against her hand. Final interview with treasury officials postponed, it said. It was a white and red form, a radiogram. Patricia read the single line of letters, the way one reads signboards from a speeding car. Final interview with treasury officials postponed. Report next month.

Patricia jumped: the radiogram was signed. There was a second line of letters on it, much shorter than the first. It was a name. Herbert Oliphant. This was what she had come to find. This was the name that would break her from Percy Tong's stranglehold, the name that would restore her freedom. Herbert Oliphant. Lord Herbert Oliphant. It was all so clear. The name that had been in the papers every day for months now. "Obviously there is only one man close enough to both the war cabinet and the treasury—and to Sir Harry Gundheim to do the job. . . ." Lord Herbert Oliphant. And her discovery made Patricia lightheaded and giddy as from champagne.

She heard the footsteps out in the hall, but she was too absorbed, too happy to notice them. She had fulfilled her mission and nothing could frighten her now.

Not even if that little white phone should ring again.

A stocky man stood in the frame of the door. He had large ears and a stubby nose, and he wore a blue serge suit. He looked at Patricia with the steady gaze of a faithful St. Bernard.

"There are some men watching the gate," said Jan Van Baalen. "I do not like their looks. You will have to leave through the coolies' entrance in the back. Let me show you."

CHAPTER VI

THE LONG ARM OF PERCY TONG

ACROSS his broad mahogany desk Robert Dumont faced the mellow features of a Chinese. The Chinese wore a short black silk jacket with long sleeves, over a gown of heavy blue silk. He had small hands, almost like a woman's, with the nail on his little finger uncut to indicate his distaste for manual labor. He was a merchant—and it was the merchant class that was the true aristocracy of this perversely mature Oriental civilization.

The merchant took a sip of the thin green tea which Liu, the boy, had brought him in a handleless cup. He did it with the amount of noise that courtesy required.

"A chilly day," he said.

"Yes," said Robert, "very chilly. I don't like the wind."

"It is the wind that makes the day unfriendly, really. It blows straight from the ocean."

"Oh does it?" Robert inquired with keen interest. "I was under the impression we had a land wind this morning. It felt sort of dry."

The Chinese gave a little sigh. "The wind changes so fast these days. It is so unpredictable."

He politely declined one of Robert's cigarettes and took an expensive cigar out of his breast pocket. He looked at it meditatively a moment, then took out a small mother-of-pearl pocketknife and clipped its end.

Robert lit it for him. "Of course," he said, "if this sea breeze keeps blowing we may have a clear sky this afternoon."

The Chinese had serious doubts. Dreamily he looked out of the window where the tall masts of the river junks were slowly filing past. After a brief struggle his skepticism seemed almost dispelled.

"Not unlikely," he said.

With this the conversation lapsed for a few moments during which the Chinese was absorbed in his smoking.

Robert re-entered the field with an entirely new attack. "On the other hand," he said (and there was a trace of pride in his voice that he had made this discovery), "the wind may shift once more, and then where would we be? More clouds."

"More clouds," said the Chinese, pensively. "Possibly. But frankly, I don't think so."

There was another lapse. Liu padded in and refilled their cups with steaming fresh tea.

Now it was the visitor's turn to contribute a new thread to the delicate texture of their conversation.

"Sometimes," he sighed, "it rains in the evening."

Robert nodded sadly. "I know it. And you are soaking wet before you can catch a rickshaw."

This thought lent new life to the subject. The visitor laughed. "I never go out at night," he said.

Robert was sympathetic. "So much the better for your health."

Could it be that the visitor's interest in climatic phenomena was exhausted? "And for one's business, too," he remarked.

Now that the shocking word had been uttered, it was only polite to ignore it for a while. Give it some time to take root, to put forth a few tender sprouts and to grow firm and strong so that it might weather the impacts of reality.

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Robert lit another cigarette and said nothing.

Gingerly the Chinese went on. "One can think," he said, "at night. Everything is so quiet. One can think about one's business."

The word was shockproof now.

"I always think about my business at night," said Robert.

"With excellent results," said the visitor.

"With very poor results," Robert protested. "If my humble efforts have brought success, it was sheer luck, nothing else."

The visitor flicked the ashes off his cigar. His voice was serious and no longer empty when he said: "I am sorry, Mr. Dumont, but I can't agree with you. I have observed the policies of your firm since the—the change. I congratulate you."

"Thank you," said Robert.

"I congratulate you and I wish to do business with you. I used to import a certain type of machinery through Carbonel & Co. Frankly, the relationship has not been a satisfactory one of late. The merchandise arrived by sea, and too much of it was lost in the process. You see," said the visitor casually, "a good many of my customers are located in the interior."

"I see," said Robert.

"And I thought it would be easier to reach them overland. It might be a long haul and expensive, too. But the merchandise would get through. It would reach its destination." He had another sip of green tea and looked at Robert, expectantly.

"Yes," said Robert, "it would reach its destination."

There was a pause. But the objective had been arrived at, and ceremony did not require any further conversational detours.

"I understand," said the visitor, "that Dumont Frères has rerouted its commerce. You are no longer receiving your shipments through the port of Shanghai?"

"Your information is correct," said Robert.

"Then," said the visitor, "I would like to be in on your shipments over the caravan road. Your compradore will receive my orders."

The Chinese had risen. He shook his own hands and bowed.

"I am sorry I took so much of your time," he said.

"Every second of it gave me pleasure," Robert replied. "And I do hope it does not rain tonight."

"Let us hope not," said the visitor as Liu, the boy, showed him out to his private rickshaw which had been waiting in front of the hong.

ROBERT was, by nature, impatient and impetuous. It was the quality that Patricia liked about his temperament. But he was the scion of a line of shrewd men—a third-generation taipan. He knew that, in the Orient, impatience was a deadly disease. He knew that time was working for those who were not in a hurry.

Robert was not in a hurry, and time was working for him.

There were more visitors. They came and had some of that fragrant green tea and politely declined Robert's cigarettes and offered thoughtful comments on the weather.

Mysteriously, word of Dumont Frères' switch to the caravan road spread among the city's Chinese business community. And one by one, the Chinese hongs with their sounding names and their far-flung inland connections cut their ties with the foreign houses that catered to them. One by one, they transferred their accounts to Dumont Frères, at Number Ten, Quai de France. They were Robert's customers. And Robert's business was booming.

Yet the success of his fortuitous plunge into business did not gladden him. It had come too suddenly, too unexpectedly—too undeservedly, perhaps. And although it was good to see the compradore's beaming face, to feel the evergrowing sheaf of checks in the morning mail, to receive the first telegraphic reports of the arrival of the consignments in the interior, something was missing.

Indeed, the large square room on the first floor of Number Ten, Quai de

France, was shrinking so fast that it seemed to assume the proportions of a monk's cell. This was it, exactly. His hong, the hong of Dumont Frères, had become his quiet monastery, and he was discharging his duties there in a strange kind of seclusion, separated from the world by thick, impenetrable walls. His Chinese customers and would-be customers came to see him, to be sure. But, with the exception of the handful of European clerks in the shipping office and in the accounting department downstairs (two Frenchmen, one Swede, two White Russians, seasoned helpers all and eager to please the taipan), he rarely saw a white face. Shanghai's society, after the first gaudy burst of hospitality, had withdrawn its hand as abruptly as it had stretched it out. There were no cocktail parties and no dinners, no invitations for Robert Dumont, taipan. He had not noticed it, in the first excited flush that had marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life. But then, when he had called on some of the nice people who had dragged him from nightclub to nightclub a week before and who, according to their Number One boys, were not at home—when he observed that taipan X and taipan Y looked the other way when they passed him on the Bund—then he knew.

While it was clear that Kurtz was using his influence with the taipan community to incite them against the whippersnapper who had fired him, there remained an element of mystery. The boycott was too complete to be traced solely to human sympathies with the old man in the wheelchair. As Robert mulled over it, he decided its motives must be stronger and more complex than that. And although there was no logical reason in the world for such conjecture, he began to link the withdrawal of his friends with the boom of his Chinese business. There, too, was an element of mystery, an element that had nothing to do with his switch to the caravan road.

As for his relationship with Patricia Matthews, it seemed to him that the same inexplicable factor had cast its shadow on it. After their fateful expedition to the Yangtze mouth, he had seen the girl only a few times, and it was evident that she avoided his company. It was not the social boycott—Robert would have known that even if she had not told him in so many words. It was something else again, deeper and more recondite, and it was capricious and eluded Robert whenever he tried to put his fingers on it. It was the shadow in her gray eyes. He saw it again, the day they had gone for a horseback ride, and he suggested a canter up around Jessfield Park, but she refused to take chances on outside Settlement roads, and insisted on staying on the racecourse in the center of the town . . . "Remember—we are hostages and supposed to behave." If it was meant to be a joke it did not sound like one. It tormented him to know that Patricia was afraid and that he could not diagnose her fear.

PATRICIA took out her stubby Mongolian pony, General Mah, trotting easily for the first hundred yards of the track. At this hour of the morning no one else was riding—they had the run of the course. The ground was slightly frozen and General Mah's hooves were thudding against it noisily. Abruptly, she broke into a canter more in keeping with the rapid flow of her thoughts.

Gloom and anxiety beclouded her mind. The morning papers had carried a routine notice of Lord Oliphant's death, tucked away on an inside page, but she had known what it meant. Murder had come her way. It had stalked her slowly and it had finally caught up with her. "The loan must be prevented at all costs," MacRae had said—only she had not understood, then. She had not suspected that the mighty Tong, furious patriot that he was, had means of "preventing" things in London just as he could prevent things in Shanghai. There was no doubt: it was the long arm of Percy Tong that had slain Lord Oliphant, and she was the only one to know. She and MacRae. . . . Her scouting mission in Harry Gundheim's office had resulted in murder.

The gnawing thought that she had been instrumental in the death of a man of whom the papers said that he had "died in an air raid while on business

in London," made her give the spur to her pony's flank. General Mah stretched his neck and turned into the second lap with a whinny of delight.

And then there was Robert Dumont. Dumont, who had come to Shanghai as a surgeon and who had, overnight, become the treaty port's most successful merchant. Dumont, who was accused in taipan circles of having entered into an unholy alliance with the mighty Tong—making his profits out of the smuggling trade and thus, as even her father had put it, "undermining the commercial and moral standards of the white trading community." Were Shanghai's foreign taipans unable to see the forest for the trees? Were they merrily careening down the roller coaster of the "New Order"?

It tormented her to think of Robert, to realize that she was in love without being free. She had not expected to get involved. It would have been better if her fancy could have waited until MacRae brought word of her release. Once the deal was consummated, once she had bought back her liberty, she would be her own master. She would be free to make her own decisions, free to plan her own life, free to love Robert Dumont.

But MacRae had not returned and she had had no word from him. She had not seen him since he had left for regions unknown, to reach Percy Tong's headquarters and to bring back her freedom. That was a month ago. She did not know the location of Percy Tong's headquarters, but it was somewhere near the Grand Canal, up Soochow way. The enemy held most of the counties around it, and it was tough country to penetrate, even for a man with a bulletproof vest.

Her restlessness let her give General Mah his head. They had circled the track three times and the sturdy Mongolian gave no sign of being winded. He was flashing by the stables now, about to enter the fourth lap, when a fantastic and profoundly Chinese extravaganza, enacted on the turf in front of her by three highly skilled performers, abruptly ended Patricia's ride. It was one of those colorful interludes, full of buffoonery and melodramatic stage effects that are apt to break, now and then, the routine of daily life along Asia's frontier.

Patricia was still in the shadow of the building when the three performers of this drama leaped out of nowhere into her path. They wasted no time with prologue or overture. Two of them flung themselves upon General Mah's neck—one grabbing the horse's upraised head, the other jerking the reins out of Patricia's hands—while the third expertly covered the scene with a revolver in each hand. The sudden check of her mount almost threw her off. General Mah bucked wildly under her.

Patricia sprang to the ground.

She looked around frantically and, finding that the horse shielded her for the moment from the two pistols, decided to run for it. Spinning on her heel she made a dart across the turf toward the stables.

SHE made good headway on the frozen ground, but the two men were faster. They let go of General Mah (who gayly resumed his course around the track) and started after her with lunging strides. They intercepted her before she had crossed the width of the track. One of them tripped her. She fell and at the same time let out a scream. Then, while the two men struggled with her, she screamed again, keeping the men's hands off her mouth as best she could.

Her resistance evoked some throaty sounds from the two—words, presumably, that belonged to one of the northern dialects. But Patricia's cries had been heard in the stables. Her mafoo and another little groom appeared in one of the doors and looked at the struggle before them with fascinated eyes. As they saw the two revolvers they threw up their hands, shrieked in utter horror, and ran as fast as their short legs would carry them in the general direction of the Nanking Road exit.

Patricia saw them run and knew that there was not a soul left on the whole racecourse.

The rest was swiftly done. One of the men had brought out an odd piece of blue cotton cloth and managed to gag her. Another produced some rope with which he tied her hands behind her

back. Still covered by the pistols, she was shoved and pulled over the race-course fence and into a waiting automobile that was quite new and spacious as Shanghai automobiles went.

Now kidnappings in China follow a rather exacting code, not very different from methods developed in other countries, except that the practice is probably a few thousand years older in the Flowery Middle Kingdom than in the upstart civilizations of the West and, as everything Chinese, a trifle more formal and more highly standardized. Generally speaking, the active participants of the game have the right to assume that the passive participant, or victim, will undergo its unavoidable hardships with that philosophic acquiescence formulated so perfectly in the precious lines of Lao Tze, while the passive participant may expect all the courtesy and consideration compatible with the circumstances. Although the purpose of the game, roughly, is to bring pressure to bear upon a non-participant, or outside party, who will yield by handing over a certain amount of money or by coming across with a political favor, the rules require that this purpose be achieved without loss of face to either active or passive participant. After a perfectly executed and successfully consummated kidnapping, therefore, the ex-kidnapper may meet the ex-victim at a banquet of forty-odd courses or play mahjong with him without the slightest trace of embarrassment or remorse. In this, as in other civilities, the Orient is much superior to the West.

Nevertheless, even in China the game cannot always be played with perfection. In at least two out of every three cases, a flaw in the performance will lead to the premature disqualification, or death, of the passive participant. This Patricia knew. As she thought rapidly, sitting between the two grim northerners who had not seen fit to remove the gag from her mouth, she suddenly perceived the flaw in the game of which she was made the victim. To be sure, it was not extraordinary for a banker's daughter to be kidnapped, although kidnappings of white persons had been few and far between for a long time. What terrified her was that one of the men had lit a cigarette and that he held it in a peculiarly clumsy fashion: between his third and fourth fingers, with the lighted end toward his palm. His odd behavior stopped her heart in panic for she knew the gesture as one used by Percy Tong's men. MacRae had taught it to her.

CHAPTER VII

"DON'T LET HIM DIE!"

"FASTER," Robert prodded the riskshaw coolie. "Chop chop!"

The rickshaw coolie was a little fellow with long legs. He turned into the avenue and now ran hell-for-leather in the direction of French Police Headquarters. His sinewy back jogged up and down between the shafts and, although it was still early in March, Robert could see beads of perspiration on the back of his neck. "Faster! Chop chop!"

The coolie obeyed. Although Shanghai rickshaw coolies are among the world's most wonderful runners, there always seems to be a built-in reserve speed, mysteriously put into action whenever the passenger is in a great hurry and succeeds in convincing the runner of the legitimacy of his haste. Robert's rickshaw coolie had pondered the problem for a few moments. Then, seeing that his passenger's hurry was more than a whim, he hit his stride. They were whisking up the avenue now, through the thickening traffic, giving the streetcars a close shave and avoiding automobile fenders by a hair's breadth.

The little fellow with long legs was breasting the traffic like the prow of a speedboat. They left a wake of cursing pushcart coolies and blinking streetcar conductors. Then, on the corner of Szechuan Road, it happened.

Another rickshaw darted out of the side street. It was also in a hurry, if for no better reason than that of fording the avenue. Its puller panted a warning, but Robert's man saw him too late. There was a grinding of wood against wood, a splintering of shafts, a coolie's

Robert's runner bounced into the air as the other rickshaw struck broadside.

outraged cry. Robert's runner bounced almost vertically into the air before he lost his footing and fell between the shafts. The other rickshaw, struck broadside, turned over on its wheel and spilled its occupant.

He was a stocky man with large ears and a stubby nose. The fall had torn a triangle in his blue serge suit and he scrambled to his feet cursing appropriately in Dutch. His round eyes sought wildly for his adversary in the mêlée. And there was no doubt that he intended to put his solid fists to work on him. At this moment he spied Robert, who had etxricated himself by a quick jump, and the anger fell from his face like a carnival mask.

"A fine trick," he laughed, "trying to kill a man after saving his life!"

Robert, too, had to laugh. "Damn you, Van Baalen," he said. "Do you always have to pop up when no one is expecting you? I'm in a hurry."

Both rickshaw coolies had struggled up by now and were noisily arguing about the damage. Robert tendered his runner a banknote which promptly produced an armistice. He was looking for another rickshaw.

"What's the hurry?" said Jan Van Baalen.

"I'm going to police headquarters. Aren't there any free rickshaws in this blasted neighborhood?"

"Police!" The Dutchman whistled through his teeth. "Because of the little lady, maybe? In Shanghai, my friend, only fools and criminals go to the police. You come with me." And before Robert knew it, he had grabbed his arm and maneuvered him into a small saloon a few steps down on Szechuan Road.

WHEN they came out, ten minutes later, the Dutchman was still holding Robert's arm. There were some rickshaws now, cruising for trade. Jan Van Baalen looked them over and rejected several. "We need two pairs of good legs," he remarked. "We've got to blitz clear across Frenchtown." Finally he found what he wanted: two medium-sized athletes with calves like polished steel.

They took off like two arrows shot from a bow. In accordance with the Shanghai custom they did not wait for their fares to tell them where they wanted to go, but sped away in the most likely direction, waiting for a remonstrance at the first wrong turn. The Sikh police discouraged rickshaws from moving abreast in dense traffic, and Robert's vehicle was ahead with the Dutchman following close behind him.

"Where are we going?" Robert craned his neck but was unable to see the other rickshaw. He shouted at random.

"Tong's Shanghai headquarters. Far end of Frenchtown." The Dutchman's voice was nearer his right ear than Robert had thought.

"How do you know where they are?"

There was no answer and Robert deduced that Van Baalen's rickshaw was lagging behind in the traffic. When he heard his voice again it seemed to come over his left shoulder.

"I've been selling them old Northrops. Did some business. . . ." The rest was drowned out by the angry honking of an automobile.

"What if she isn't there?" No answer came. Robert repeated his question, turning his head the other way. But the Dutchman was moving up on his right.

"Then," said Van Baalen, "we'll have to see Mynheer Tong himself."

Robert scoffed. "You are crazy, Van Baalen. No white man has ever seen the fellow!"

They had come to the red light of an intersection, and both rickshaws stopped abreast. While the runners were wiping their faces with incredibly filthy rags, Van Baalen talked to Robert in his most nonchalant parlor voice.

"I have an idea that Tong is pleased with the way you are running your business, Dumont. Your contretemps with Omura, your successful attempt to keep the enemy from snatching Chinabound freight, the way you re-routed those hot cargoes. Mr. Tong liked everything about it. So he told all his Chinese friends to cut their connections with other hongs and come to you. Dumont Frères was to be the clearing house for the whole works."

"Nonsense!" Robert spoke angrily. "How could he have done it?"

"Tong's influence with the Chinese community in this town . . ."

The light had changed to green and their two runners shot ahead, with Van Baalen, who had been on the right, leading.

They were turning into a side street now. There was less traffic and the runners managed to move abreast, swerving only occasionally to dodge a bulky wheelbarrow that blocked the narrow passage.

"Then you think it will be easy to approach Tong?" Evidently, this was no time for anger. Robert frankly admired the Dutchman's seemingly unlimited command of behind-the-scenes information.

"No," said Van Baalen, "not easy. Someone—a friend of mine—tried it. William MacRae was his name. He never got to see Percy—the enemy liquidated him while he was on his way. Or bandits maybe. They found his body up Soochow way, last week."

The blare of a Chinese brass band interrupted their conversation. It was stationed in the open window above a tea store, and its shrill and clangorous music was meant to attract customers from the street—a Chinaman's conception of advertising.

Robert looked at the Dutchman, impatient for a hint of encouragement. Van Baalen seemed to be thinking hard. His face was sheer concentration. He did not speak until they rounded a few corners and the noise died away. This was a crooked little street with small Chinese shops, and with tenements on top. The air was full of the cry of hawkers and the piercing noises that came out of a pocket-sized factory where they filed brassware. Next door was one of those cheap kitchens, with half a dozen fried ducks hung up as decoys, and with two or three coolies sitting on the doorsteps with their rice bowls and their long wooden chopsticks. A few children were around, in their filthy winter-quilted dresses—the gray cotton straggling out at every rent.

They had reached the dark—the Asiatic—half of this metropolis in which four million people were scrambling for the crumbs off the white man's table.

"It all depends," said Van Baalen, quietly, "on the will of one man. He's the only one whom Percy Tong calls *ko-ko*—elder brother. The only one whom Percy trusts without reservations—his deputy for Greater Shanghai. If he can't get us a date with Percy, nobody can help you, Dumont."

HE stopped his rickshaw in front of a narrow-breasted Chinese house. They paid their runners and went toward the door. Four redoubtable bodyguards, northerners with hard faces and double cartridge belts, stood in front of the entrance, fingering their guns. Their narrow eyes were on Jan Van Baalen's left hand and Robert saw that the Dutchman held his cigarette in a peculiarly clumsy fashion: between his third and fourth fingers, with the lighted end toward his palm.

The front room looked like a poorly tended silk store. It was full of people with solemn faces. They were Chinese of all ages and descriptions. Robert no-

ticed some old-fashioned-looking women with long tight trousers and bound feet. They sat around a table in the corner, sipping tea. Others stood about in small groups, stiffly. No one paid any attention to the two foreign devils.

"I don't like it," Van Baalen whispered. "Looks like a wake."

They elbowed their way through the stolid assembly and entered the small room in the back. A kerosene lamp was burning on one of the walls and by its flickering light they could see an old man on a couch. His face, with the high forehead, and the sparse beard under the chin, bore the traces of withered Chinese aristocracy—faded vestiges of Manchu days in the Forbidden City.

"Look," said Van Baalen. "He's dying."

"Who is he?"

"*Ko-Ko*, the elder brother. King of the Lower Yangtse. God! He's all blue around the mouth."

Robert went over to the bedside. Instinctively he felt the pulse. It was rapid. The old man was tossing feverishly on the couch. He was very short of breath and a deep rattling cough that came in vicious fits all but choked him. Robert guessed his fever to be close to a hundred and six. The blueness around the mouth was the most telling of his symptoms.

"Bring over that lamp," he told Van Baalen.

The Dutchman took the kerosene lamp off its hook on the wall and held it up near the old man's head. "What has he got?" he asked, shakily.

"Bronchial pneumonia. Double. He's got it badly."

"Will he die?"

Robert shrugged his shoulders. At this moment, by the light of the lamp, they noticed that they were not alone with the old one. A small figure rose from a stool near the foot of the couch —a hunchback, a white-skinned Chinese of uncertain age with the face of a goblin. He wore a long gown of dark blue cotton which made the transparent color of his face and hands stand out weirdly. He introduced himself as the herb doctor.

"Evil spirits play in his stomach and chest," he said blandly. "It is sad, sad. But perhaps I can cure him."

"What kind of evil spirits?" Van Baalen asked, obviously perturbed.

The herb doctor's thin white hands spread like a fan. "Foxes," he said.

And he shuffled out of the door into the silk store to busy himself, over a little iron stove, with his concoctions.

THE old one was very ill, but he was conscious. After another brief but stormy attack of coughing, he turned his emaciated face on his two visitors. His blue lips formed a question.

"Why have you come?"

"We have come," said Robert, "to find the truth."

"The truth?" The old one whispered laboriously. "The truth is a silken thread that it took a little worm a million years to spin."

"And yet," said Robert, "the wise man can unravel it in the flicker of an eye. You are a wise man, old one."

This was too much for Van Baalen. Mysticism was not his line.

"Bother your silk thread!" he said. "Don't you remember me, Mr. Liang?"

The old one shifted his eyes with some effort. "I remember you," he said. "You are Mr. Van Baalen. You sold me airplanes." He caught his breath. "Good airplanes."

Van Baalen was much relieved. "We have come, Monsieur Dumont and I," he said, "to ask you a favor, Mr. Liang. A great favor. Monsieur Dumont is in love with the lady who was kidnapped by your men. He wants you to release her."

The old one was struggling for air. His gasping had become more painful. "I could not oblige you," he said, "even if I wanted to. The lady is with the Ruler of the Silvery Sands."

"Is she living?" Robert demanded.

Old Liang was silent for a short while. "I have reason to believe," he said finally "that she is living at this moment."

Robert could no longer curb his eagerness. "Where is she? If your silvery ruler is Percy Tong, I must see him."

Impatience was bad form, even in the face of death. The hint of a frown appeared on Liang's high forehead. "What can you expect?" he asked.

"But don't you see?" It was Van Baalen who intervened, happy to turn the conversation back to practicality. "Mr. Tong had to kidnap the girl because it was dangerous to leave her at large. She had helped him in several deals, and she knew too much. She knew, for example, that a certain important gentleman in London did not die a natural death. Now this young man, as it happens, is Mr. Tong's protégé. If he marries the girl . . ."

"Yes," said the old one. He understood. "Monsieur Dumont could vouch for her conduct. As his wife, she would be no threat to the Ruler of the Silvery Sands."

This was better than they had dared hope. It was precisely the strategy that Robert had developed in the saloon on Szechuan Road. They had won the first point.

"But," breathed the old one, "it is impossible. No white man may ever see him."

"You could!" Robert cried. "You could arrange for me to see him. If I explained to him. . . . You must help me, Mr. Liang!" Robert clung to his hope with a crazy determination.

But Mr. Liang tossed about angrily, and his blue lips pronounced a *No*. "Let an old man die in peace," he said slowly.

Robert sat down in the stiff hardwood chair that was inlaid with mother-of-pearl. "Old one," he said, "perhaps you do not have to die."

Mr. Liang had closed his eyes and Robert was not certain whether he had heard him.

"Would you arrange for me to see Percy Tong if I made you live?"

The old man did not open his eyes, but he spoke. "There were some things that I had wanted to attend to—things I wanted to do before I died. If you can make me live, Monsieur Dumont, you shall have your wish."

"Give me twelve hours." But then, as Robert jumped up, he met the St. Bernard eyes of Van Baalen.

They were round and in them stood the cloud of a great disappointment.

"You are sunk," he whispered. "Now you *are* sunk, Dumont. Why on earth did you tell him you could cure him?"

"Maybe I can," Robert said quickly. "It was my only chance. But I need your help, Van Baalen. For God's sake, keep an eye on the old fellow till I'm back. Don't let anybody touch him. And keep that hunchback sorcerer away from him at all costs. Don't let him feed the old man any of his quack brews. Use violence if necessary." Robert strode to the door. At the threshold of the silk store he turned:

"And don't let him die!"

CHAPTER VIII

TWO SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE

LATER, when Jan Van Baalen recalled to his mind the sixty minutes that followed Robert's exit from the sickroom of Liang, he put it down with a shudder as the most harrowing hour he had ever been compelled to spend. At first his task seemed rather easy. The old one fell asleep and his breath came with a tortured regularity. From the silk store in front, Van Baalen could hear subdued voices and the wooden click of chopsticks. No doubt they were having their supper, after a trying day of advance mourning for the head of the family. The fragrant odor of roasting pork and chicken, with a trace of lobster, was wafted into the back room. Now and then, a nephew or third cousin would peek in curiously and, having convinced himself that old Liang was still holding on, withdraw with mouselike rapidity.

But then everything changed. A terrific rattle broke from the old man's chest. He opened his eyes in horror and hoisted himself up on the couch, desperately fighting for air. His hands grabbed the blanket in agony. Wild fear was on his face, and his body jerked and twisted like a fish caught up on a hook. In two seconds the frame of the door filled with wide-eyed relatives, some with their greasy chopsticks still in their fingers. The spectacle had begun. Old Liang was dying.

Van Baalen sat on the stool at the foot of the couch and wiped his brow. "Don't let him die," Dumont had said. How could he stop old Liang from joining his ancestors now? What was keeping Dumont, anyway? Had he gone to call an ambulance? Perhaps he had thought better of it and decided not to return at all, leaving him in the clutches of those heathen Chinee in the silk store. For a few minutes Jan Van Baalen was not sure who was the sicker, he or old Liang. He met the stares of those younger Liangs with as much composure as he could muster. Liang's body was no longer writhing—he had fallen back on the couch, his breath a whistle.

Suddenly the wall of solicitous spectators cleaved and in the breach the herb doctor appeared. With as much grace as the hump on his back allowed him, he came marching toward his patient, carrying before him a huge wooden bowl. The steam from the bowl enveloped his impish face, and he looked even more like an ancient sorcerer than before. The Dutchman got up.

Van Baalen's Chinese was definitely rusty. He had picked it up at the time he was in the diamond business in Batavia—the merchant class in the Indies was almost solidly Chinese and anybody who wanted to sell them anything did well to deliver his sales talk in their language. A rapid checkup netted a few fairly well-preserved fragments of the old vocabulary. Unfortunately, it was Cantonese. Van Baalen tried it.

"What beautiful and most entrancing medicine!" he exclaimed. "You must be a great doctor."

Surprisingly, it worked. A well brought up Chinese considers it his duty to answer in the dialect in which he is addressed, even if it is his least fluent.

"Not at all," said the hunckback, evidently flattered. "My abilities are very poor."

Van Baalen came nearer. "M-m-m-m-m!" He inhaled the fragrance of the concoction with widened nostrils. "What an enthralling aroma!"

"Well," said the herb doctor, coyly, "not everybody in my profession knows this recipe. It is an art that wants to be mastered."

"And I dare say you master it, my friend. Would it be asking too much for you to tell me what wonderful ingredients went into this brew?"

"Strictly speaking," said the man, "it is a professional secret. But if you are sincerely interested. . . ."

"I should be honored to be taken into your confidence."

The hunchback brought his lips close to Van Baalen's ear. "Ginseng roots and digitalis," he said. "Quinine bark, tender mandrakes and acorn husks. Mugwort powder, camphor seeds and cassia twigs. Saxifrage grass and the crumbling buds of purple lotus. But above all," and his voice died to a whisper, "dried sea horses."

"Dried sea horses?"

The Chinese nodded. "They are the thing for the stomach. Sufficient numbers of them well steeped in boiling oil, will drive out the evil spirits from his intestines." With this he suddenly remembered his patient. Old Liang was lying flat on his back, trembling. "I must hurry to make him drink it."

"You must," agreed Van Baalen. "It will do him no end of good."

THE herb doctor was making for the couch. Van Baalen felt something happening to his throat. At least a dozen pairs of eyes were gazing from the door of the silk store.

"Use violence if necessary," Dumont had said. Cantonese repartee would no longer do.

With two hasty steps the Dutchman intercepted the goblin. "Let me help you, esteemed friend," he said. "Two will do it more easily than one." And with a clumsy nudge of his left elbow, he upset the bowl, spilling its precious, steaming contents over the floor of the sickroom.

At this moment a furious voice came from the threshold of the silk store—Dumont's voice. "You idiot!" he shouted. "What have you done? I left you here to take care of the patient, and you spill the medicine that might have saved his life. You no-good grandson of a female goat!" Dumont fairly flew across the room and slapped poor Jan Van Baalen across his big, bewildered face. Then

he turned around to the wall of nephews and cousins that had closed again behind him. "My clumsy servant," he said, in his best Shanghai dialect. "You must not pay any attention to him. He is stupid and I shall dismiss him for his stupidity. The scum of the earth!" And, brushing the tremendously relieved Dutchman aside, he proceeded to examine his patient. The cyanosis had increased: the lungs were full of fluid, and the heart was not pumping hard enough to clear them. The old one was weaker than an hour ago. But he wasn't dying yet.

Robert turned abruptly to the herb doctor. "How long would it take you to prepare another infusion?"

The goblin was so distressed he could hardly answer. Once more his thin white hands spread out like a fan. "All night," he whimpered. "At least all night. And it is expensive."

Robert produced a hundred-dollar bill. "Hurry," he said. "There is not a minute to lose. And make it good and strong!"

Then, while the nonplussed herb doctor scurried out of the room, he took a gilded screen from the head of the couch and moved it to the door of the silk store. "I must protect you now," he said to the assembled Liangs, "for evil spirits will be driven out and, floating in the air of this room, may invade any one of you through nostrils or mouth."

They took it remarkably well, receding from the threshold in solemn silence—although it seemed to Robert that a young fellow with horn-rimmed glasses, sitting at the far end of the silk store with a copy of the *Ta Kung Pao,* took advantage of the newspaper to hide a disrespectful grin.

"It is a great shame," sighed Jan Van Baalen, "that evil spirits cannot walk through screens. If the old one dies on you, those heathens will tear you limb from limb."

Robert did not share his pessimism. "Get me that pitcher of water." From a small package, taken out of his pocket, he counted eight white tablets.

"Aspirin?" queried Van Baalen.

"Sulfathiazole—a miracle drug, you might call it. Came out just before I left France, and I took some along. It will cure the old one—if his heart is strong enough, that is."

The Dutchman was frankly skeptical. "Dried sea horses, perhaps? Just the thing for the stomach?"

Robert dropped the eight tablets into the water, carefully crushing them. He gave Van Baalen a scalding look. "It helps the white blood corpuscles, stupid. Gives them a chance to multiply so that they can attack their enemies, the germs. The germs, of course, put up a stiff fight, but they generally lose. Give me a hand there, will you?"

They lifted the old one's head and shoulders and Robert fed him the medicine. Its bitter taste brought some expression back into Liang's face. He gave Robert a slow gaze but did not speak. Robert took it for a silent vote of confidence. "Now," he said to Van Baalen, "there is nothing to do but wait." He looked at his watch: it was seven-thirty.

But the Dutchman chose to be persistently disagreeable. "If he pegs out before morning, there'll be three funerals instead of one." He jerked his thumb toward the silk store, whence they could hear the muffled tap of several mahjong games.

EVERYTHING went well until an hour or so before midnight. A frightened servant brought them some rice and hot wine and Van Baalen dozed off in a mother-of-pearl chair immediately afterwards. The Liangs in the silk store had apparently decided to stay up all night, but the screen, or perhaps the evil spirits, kept them at their mahjong. Robert sat on the stool, listening to his patient's breath.

Then, after the first three hours of the watch, old Liang's gasping became more irregular. The rattling noise in his lungs increased and sweat broke out on his face. He began to toss about hectically. His blue lips were mumbling incoherent phrases.

The mahjong games stopped. No doubt the nephews and cousins in there were listening behind the screen.

A furious, retching cough, loud enough to wake Van Baalen, shook the old one shortly after eleven. He jerked himself

up in blank terror, tears streaming from his wide eyes, and one hand clutching his throat as if to tear it open. Then, suddenly, he fell back. There was quiet.

Robert, seized with panic, sprang over to the bed and laid his ear on Liang's perspiring chest. The heart beat came slow and very faint.

He saw the mute question in Van Baalen's eyes and he answered it with a shrug. The crisis had come. If the old one's heart failed them now, they were lost. If it could pull another hour, they were over the hump.

At eleven-thirty they gave Liang a second dose of sulfathiazole—only one tablet, this time. After that his panting became a bit more regular and the rattling noise subsided little by little. Evidently, the struggle between the white blood cells and the germs had entered its crucial stage. The whites were consolidating their initial gains and pushing on toward victory. Gradually the patient's lungs were clearing, his respiration became less painful, and Van Baalen remarked that the old one's lips had taken on a more natural color—no longer blue, really.

By two o'clock old Liang was sweating heavily. His sleep was quiet and relaxed, however, and he was no longer panting. The breath passed gently through his nostrils, flowing back and forth almost unencumbered.

There were three tablets left in Robert's package. He administered another to the patient at three-thirty. By that time, the army of the whites had won a clear victory. The Liangs in the silk store were having tea with mahjong, Van Baalen was nodding in his chair, and the old man was slumbering serenely.

Robert sat on the small stool without his coat, his shirt-sleeves rolled up. Now that the crisis had passed he felt dead tired. He craved a cup of coffee—*noir*—a large glass of it, as they used to serve it in his favorate cafe on Boul' Mich'. But he did not dare to stick his nose around the screen lest the whole tribe out there swamp him with questions. Not yet. Besides, all they had was probably thin green tea. Robert decided to sit it out.

AT SEVEN-THIRTY in the morning, the herb doctor appeared. He carried himself with an air of importance and dignity (after all, he had not lost any face) and in his hands was the bowl with the steaming brew. Robert had just given the patient his fourth dose, and old Liang was awake. His skin was dry, his color better, and his temperature nothing to worry about. He was weak, but no longer a sick man.

His eyes turned to the hunchback and, for the first time in twelve hours, he spoke. "I fear, Kao-ching, I shall not need your medicine. The great white physician has done a miracle." At this the goblin stared at the old one, then stared at Robert and finally at Van Baalen. Without a word he turned round and walked out, drawing the screen in place behind him. And, for all his fatigue and strain, Robert felt sorry for him—they were of different schools, perhaps, but in a way it was the same profession.

"You'll be all right in a little while," he said to the old one. "Your heart pulled you through."

Old Liang smiled wanly. "It was not the heart," he said. "It was the great white doctor."

And, despite Robert's protests, he got up and walked toward the entrance of the silk store. He pushed aside the screen and stood in the door, facing the children of his blood.

"I have recovered," he said to them. "You shall go back to your homes and places of business. Let us praise the great white doctor."

Two dozen Liangs, with circles under their eyes, dispersed. A very old woman with bound feet now emerged from the shadows of a corner and hobbled toward them. In front of Robert she threw herself to the floor, touching her forehead to the dirty carpet. Three times. It was a kowtow, an old-fashioned Chinese kowtow, and Robert was embarrassed. This was the China of the first Dumont, thanking the West for deliverance from evil.

But Liang beckoned to the young fellow with horn-rimmed glasses who had been reading the *Ta Kung Pao* last night

and who alone had remained in the silk store when the others left.

"Come here, Feng Li."

Taking the young man's hand, he turned to Robert. "Confucius says: 'Contempt and hatred will pursue him whose promises of the tongue do not ripen into action. A gentleman, therefore, prefers the unpopularity due to refusal to the charge of breaking his promise.' This is my grandson, Feng Li. He graduated from M. I. T. two years ago. Now he will use my private radio to announce your visit to the Ruler of the Silvery Sands." He went back to his couch, overcome with weakness.

Inside of ten minutes the product of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was in contact with Tong's headquarters up-country. His equipment was simple but by no means primitive. He worked it on a battered desk (which might have come out of a downtown hong) in an alcove off the silk store, and his fingers were nimble on the key. Robert and the Dutchman followed his *di-di-di-da,* agog with suspense. They heard the staccato chirp of the answer that young Feng got over his earphones. Suddenly, his face went blank with astonishment. He turned to his grandfather.

"Tong has flown to the caravan road. The enemy is attacking down there and Percy is directing operations on the spot."

"Can't you get in touch with him?" Liang, on his couch, was a staunch believer in the power of radio.

"I can try." He was working his key again, silently. There was no answer. But young Feng was not easily discouraged. He kept on sending the five letters of his station, calling Percy Tong on the agreed wave length. And, after half an hour of mounting tension, the earphones began to chirp again. Percy Tong was coming in.

Feng Li's face brightened. "He's in the stronghold on the Yunnan border. His operator's answering!"

"Where is the girl?" Robert broke in, unwilling to restrain himself any longer.

There was some more *di-di-di-da.* "His prisoner is with him," Feng Li announced. "Alive."

CHAPTER IX

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

ROBERT viewed the camouflaged low-wing bomber with suspicion—the same kind of suspicion that the Dutchman had shown toward the sulfathiazole the night before.

"Are you sure you can manage this bird? It's a long flight to Yunnan."

Van Baalen looked at him with the most innocent expression his round St. Bernard eyes were capable of. "I was a co-pilot on the Holland-Batavia run for a couple of years," he said. "These ships I've been selling to Mynheer Tong were new in 1934. Don't worry, Dumont. I'll handle her all right."

Robert frowned. "A pilot, too? How many people are you, Van Baalen?"

"Only one. Mind getting into the rear cockpit?"

Robert clambered in. Jan Van Baalen with his wily brain behind those naive eyes was growing more enigmatic with every hour he knew him. They shook hands with Feng Li who had taken them to Tong's secret airport some twenty-five miles north of the city limits—a level wheat field with hangars that looked like ice houses. A Chinese village, controlled by fairly well-armed guerrillas, was near by. This was territory that the enemy claimed as "occupied."

It was a clear March day and the breeze that came down the Yangtze Valley smelled of spring. The sky was light blue, with a few white cloud fragments nervously hurrying toward the horizon. The puddles on the wheat field were still frozen around the edges, but their centers were open and blinked in the bright morning sun. Over toward the village two large yellow kites were bobbing in the wind. Dogs barked in the distance.

The plane was a sturdy Northrop—an out-dated model, but still good for service in the backwoods of China. Tong's organization had bought several dozen of them for contact between scattered guerrilla bands and an occasional counter-attack rather than for bombing. There were two seats and Van Baalen

got into the front one. They pulled the transparent top over the cockpits.

Feng Li took off his hat to them. He had an inscrutable smirk on his face and his fingers were crossed.

Above Chungking they had switched on the reserve gas tank and left the flowing highway, the Yangtze, turning southwest into the hills. They flew along the narrow valley of a tributary, and the rolling mountains beneath were green with crops. Even now, in March, with the tang of winter still in the air, the good earth produced food for its patient people. After the Wagnerian grandeur of the Yangtze gorges, this part of the country was almost idyllic, with walled villages crowning the peaks, and with quiet monasteries and withered pagodas tucked away in forgotten glens.

But soon it became barren, and the mountain sides grew steep and rugged. The villages were more thinly strewn—the last ones they saw were pathetic clusters of mud huts, rotting away in lonely oblivion. Then human settlement stopped altogether.

Van Baalen had turned west again, into the sinking sun. The stony loneliness beneath was the Yunnan frontier. They were approaching the most distant of all the theaters of war, the region where Chinese armies were fighting to keep the back door open for supplies. Soon now they must hit the caravan road. Percy Tong's stronghold could not be far.

THE Dutchman was not looking at his map. Instead he studied a pencil drawing that Feng Li had made him. It showed the exact location of the stronghold and, more important, the military airport within the Chinese lines on which they were to land. It also gave the warning outlines of the enemy salient that crept north toward the caravan road from Haiphong. The front was active down here—this was not a dormant war as the Yangtze Valley. It was important to keep one's course.

Suddenly Van Baalen's head jerked around. He pointed down with the joy of a man who has unearthed the hidden treasure for which he has dug all night. Under them lay the large quadrangle of mud and stone that was Percy Tong's fortress. They could see it clearly and it was formidable and impressive even from this altitude, with its contours accentuated by the lengthened shadows of the hour.

It was now that Robert felt the purpose of his mission with a keen-edged reality. He had repressed its since that early morning hour when Feng Li's radio had chirped the word "alive," and he had made a good job of putting it aside. It had been there, to be sure, all the time, but it had rested in the darker chambers of his consciousness while his senses had been occupied with the well-defined and ever changing pictures about him. Life had been demanding these last two days. The scream of a rickshaw coolie on the corner of Szechuan Road had been the starting gun for a frenzied race against time. Since then he had snatched a dying man from the clutches of death. Since then he had traveled a thousand miles into a war-torn continent. He had been thrown into lightning actions and reactions. Surely, he could not have weathered it if he had not given himself completely to the demands of the moment.

But now the protective obliteration lifted. The picture of Patricia Matthews sprang to the foreground. It stood out sharply in the imagery of his brain. Robert knew that in this dusky hour, in the raw and rugged moonscape there, his life and hers were merging like two rivers.

In the fading light of the day Van Baalen had made out the airport. It was the only piece of level ground in this contorted country—thousands of coolies must have toiled for months to carve it out of the hillside. The Dutchman throttled back for the glide.

Could it be that the large ears in front of Robert had stiffened? Something was wrong. In the quiet of the idling motor, Van Baalen called over his shoulder: "Have a look at that windsock."

And it was not the windsock he meant. Fluttering on the hangar roof below was a large white flag. In the white was a circle of deep red. The airport was no longer in Chinese hands.

A shot rang out behind his back.

Van Baalen gave her the gun and, with an angry roar, the Northrop pulled out of its glide. They gained altitude. Circling high, Van Baalen turned around and his St. Bernard's eyes were at once apologetic and quizzical. Although he did not speak, Robert translated the expression of his eyes into words. "Turn back and find an airport behind the Chinese lines?" Robert did not move his lips either. But his thumb pointed down emphatically to Percy Tong's stronghold, a mile or two from the airport. "*We must get down there.*"

"We must get down there." During the day's long flight Robert had gained complete confidence in the Dutchman's abilities as a pilot. His maneuvering in shaking off three pesky enemy pursuits just west of Hankow had been both brave and skillful. Robert had no misgivings about Van Baalen's prowess—he would manage to set her down safely some place. He was burning to set his foot on the ground, to make a dash for the fort. As long as its stone walls stood, there was hope. There was hope to find Patricia.

VAN BAALEN had picked a place to sit down. It was the most gently sloping plot of ground in this region, the barren side of a hill back of the fort. As they circled it for the approach Robert could see, despite the growing darkness, that there were some loose rocks on it. They looked like pebbles strewn out of a child's hand. Once down there, they should be able to reach the stronghold by foot in less than twenty minutes. Van Baalen cut the gun.

It was surprising how slowly the hillside floated toward them. They glided down securely over the rolling terrain. Now they were close above it. Van Baalen apparently intended to set the plane down at the foot of the field and to let her roll upward until she would have spent her momentum. Their landing speed was sixty-five. . . .

It happened a second later. As the plane was charging uphill with the wheels on the ground, a terrific force bashed against it. Robert was thrown forward as by the unsuspected cuff of a giant. His forehead hit the instrument board in front of him. His world went black.

There was quiet. Strange—he was aware of it! Numbly he unbuckled his safety belt. His fingers reached for the sliding top: it moved. Robert fell out of the cockpit, to the stony ground.

He saw the plane before him, a smashed and battered wreck, with the tail standing up at a crazy angle—the propeller ground away, the landing gear snapped off, the front part of the fuselage pleated like an accordion, telescoped against the thing that had opposed it. The thing was one of the pebbles strewn over the field: an immense boulder that must have lain here since the primeval dawn.

Robert touched his hand to his head. He brought it back wet with blood. He felt his arms and legs, slowly. They were sound. He ached all over and the shock had dulled his senses. But he was all right.

He stood up.

Something moved in Van Baalen's cockpit. The transparent top opened and in the crack Robert saw the Dutchman's round face. It seemed, in the uncertain light of the evening, as if it had no color at all. His eyes were wide and startled. Then he managed a grin. "*Kaputt,*" he said.

There was something odd about this. Van Baalen made no effort to extricate himself from the wreck. Robert stepped nearer to help him out.

At this moment he saw the Dutchman's hand. In it was a revolver.

"Raise your hands," said Van Baalen.

Robert smiled. If Van Baalen was in the mood for a practical joke at this time, he was all right.

"Raise your hands!" Van Baalen did not smile. And he did not look as if he were joking.

Robert's heart sank. The Dutchman had gone mad. Something had hit him over the head and he had lost his mind. Tact and prudence were in order until he had found himself. Robert decided to humor him and raise his hands.

"Turn around!" commanded the Dutchman.

Robert faced the boulder-strewn mountainside. A shot rang out behind his back. It echoed and re-echoed from the hills, piercing the still evening like the discharges of a full-blown battle. When it was over the silence was deeper than before. Robert turned.

The Dutchman's round head hung over the edge of his cockpit. A black smear was on his temple.

Robert stood there and it was as if hours went by until he could move. Stiffly he went over to the wreck. There was nothing wrong with Van Baalen's torso. The triangle that marked their

encounter on Szechuan Road still gaped in the back of his blue serge suit. Then, farther down, Robert's searching hands found the reason why the Dutchman had not climbed out. His right leg was squeezed off above the knee.

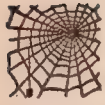
Jan Van Baalen. . . . The man with the stubby nose and the large ears had repaid his debt in full. At the point of his gun he had prevented Robert from attending to his injuries, from wasting precious time. . . .

The Dutchman's right hand dangled limply over the cockpit. Robert caught it and shook it silently. But the word "*Merci*" stuck in his throat.

Then he picked up the Dutchman's gun that had fallen to the ground. It was a heavy Mauser.

CHAPTER X

BEHIND THE MOONDOOR



THE outer walls of the stronghold were sixteen feet high, easily. They were made of large unhewn boulders with hard mud as cement, and sloping back toward the top. In the darkness which was now fairly complete, Robert stumbled around the huge oblong in search of an entrance. He discovered it, with his groping fingers rather than with his eyes, on the narrow side opposite from where he had started. It was a small door of heavy wood, deep in the thickness of the wall. Two Mongolian ponies, heavily accoutered, were tethered to a post before it. They snorted nervously as Robert approached, then devoted themselves to the short grass that the stony ground provided.

The two ponies were the only blobs of life in the quiet darkness. There were no guards protecting that entrance. Robert tried the door. It gave with a groan.

Inside, he found himself in a small enclosure, a rather well kept front yard with two or three pine trees that loomed black into the sky. In front of him was a wall, not as tall as the outer enclosure, and at his right he made out the contours of another door. It was not guarded either. Robert opened it and found that it led into an underground passage or tunnel. He went down eight or nine steps and proceeded carefully along the hard dry ground of the passageway which, after some fifty feet, turned abruptly to the left. Robert groped his way along the wall. Then his foot tripped and he almost fell up a set of steps. A faint light shone ahead.

It was a hurricane lamp hung high on a wall. In its fuzzy gleam Robert saw that he had penetrated into the inner enclosure. Low Chinese buildings with slanting roofs and torn paper windows stood around a spacious courtyard after the fashion of Chinese family homes of wealth and prominence. Life, as it had for thousands of years, faced inward. Only there was no life in this court. The buildings were dark, and the shadows did not move, and the fiddle of a lone cricket was the only sound.

Robert went inside. The tired glow of the hurricane lamp outside fell through the paper windows and their carved frames wrought fantastic patterns on the floor. This was not meant for family life. With two neat rows of cots the building looked like a barracks and that, Robert imagined, was what it was. It was in good order but vacant. At its far end Robert found that it interconnected with the next building: another deserted barracks. Soldiers' greatcoats and caps hung on the walls and some antiquated rifles leaned in a corner.

There were four or five of those buildings with enough room for several hundred soldiers. None of them was there. In the last building Robert came upon the mess hall—long wooden tables with bowls half filled with rice, and strewn with chopsticks. Rough wooden stools stood about in disorder, some overturned. Whoever had eaten here last had left in a hurry.

Then, to his dismay, Robert found himself once more in the courtyard with the hurricane lamp. The barrack buildings were arranged in a large L and Robert had traversed them without getting anywhere. He was nettled and discouraged. This architecture, as everything else in China, was designed to give you the runaround. He had been through every square yard of this place and found

no trace of life. If Percy Tong and his men had evacuated the stronghold, it was likely that they had taken Patricia with them. If indeed nothing more drastic than an evacuation had occurred. . . .

AS HE stood in the dimly lit courtyard, Robert's eyes fell on a parapet that ran between the mess hall and the higher wall of the inner enclosure. In it was a moondoor. He stepped over its raised threshold and discovered that his search had not been complete. Here, between the barracks and the outside wall, was the real heart of the fortress. Robert looked into a lovely Chinese garden with spreading trees and zigzagging ghost bridges. Before him was a Chinese house, a luxurious temple-like structure with painted pillars and gracefully curving eaves. In one of its windows Robert saw a light. He knocked at the door. There was no answer.

This, no doubt, was Percy Tong's private building. Like a war lord of old he had built this stronghold in the strategic mountains of the southwest and, for all its defensive strength and its facilities for a large garrison, he had not neglected his personal comfort. Robert felt his heart beat faster. He was trespassing on the privacy of a mighty lord. Once more he went back to the moondoor, looked into the courtyard with the hurricane lamp. No one was there, except the cricket. He slapped his pocket and felt the metal of Van Baalen's gun. Then he returned to the temple-like structure in the back.

He pushed open the door and it was as he had suspected: there was all the luxury and measured ostentation of a well-to-do Chinese home. His feet sank into a soft rug and his eyes, accustomed to darkness by now, made out the rich brocade that covered the walls, and the wooden statues in the corners. This was an impressively formal reception hall. Robert crossed it diagonally and came to two small rooms whose furniture showed a more intimate character. In one of them he found nothing more Oriental than a carved Buddha sitting on a Chippendale secretary beside which was an expensive looking radio kit. Adjoining was the room whose light he had seen through the window. He entered it.

It was what, in an Occidental home, would have been called the living-room. Its furnishings were plainly devised for domestic ease. There were some overstuffed chairs, Western except for the pattern of their embroidered silk covers, several shelves with books, a heavy carved teakwood table, and, in the far corner, a generous couch.

On the couch sat Percy Tong.

Robert recognized him at once. He was just as Feng Li had described him. His face was smooth and genial, with a remarkably ponderous forehead and a thin sensitive nose, and it would have been difficult to believe that he was more than forty if it had not been for the slight pudginess around his chin. His black hair was quite short and parted in the middle. His appearance was altogether well-groomed. He wore a Western-style business suit and a dark tie, and Robert was surprised to see that he was small and slender. Among Chinese mucky-mucks, customarily devoted to making up for centuries of starvation, this was exceptional.

Percy Tong did not rise. He sat there, on his couch, looking at Robert with a vacant expression, a half-smile which seemed to invite the unannounced visitor to approach. Robert bowed politely and went around the teakwood table in the center, toward the couch. The picture before him was as harmonious and serene as a scene from *The West Chamber*. The master of the house . . . sitting among his brocades and jades and precious eggshell porcelain. Yes, the picture was tranquil and very Chinese, and there was no flaw in it. It was perfect.

Except for one disturbing detail. Percy Tong was dead.

FOR a moment the room spun before Robert's eyes. Here he was, frustrated at the very goal of his journey. He had reached his destination only to have fate cheat him. In his race against time, catastrophe had overtaken him and got there first. He was beaten. His mind

was not equal to the task of planning the next step. Most probably, there was no next step. Robert felt a desire to retrace his course, to find the wreck of the Northrop and to spend the rest of the night sitting there, holding a lonely death watch by Van Baalen. He walked toward the door.

And as he walked he heard voices. They came from behind the wall of the living-room. Robert stopped. The words he heard were English.

"You still claim," said one of the voices, "that you had no connections with Mr. Tong?"

"No," said another voice—a woman's.

"You mean yes? You had no connections with Mr. Tong?"

"Yes, I had no connections with Mr. Tong," said the woman, angrily. The voice gave Robert such a turn it was difficult not to cry out. He had found Patricia Matthews.

The words were being spoken behind a small door at his left. Robert tiptoed. The small door was ajar.

"Then," said the voice of another man, "what were you doing here this afternoon when our troops took this fort?"

"I was reading the newspapers."

"You were in this house," said the voice that had spoken first, "before the battle began?"

"I arrived here with Mr. Tong," said Patricia, "yesterday."

"Ah! You came with Mr. Tong before our troops crossed the ridge. That is very interesting."

"I don't see what's interesting about it." Patricia's voice was weary.

"Because then, perhaps, you came here to defend the mountain pass."

Patricia laughed. "Perhaps."

Suddenly the voice asked, "What is your name?"

"That's none of your business. How often do I have to tell you!"

There was a pause. Apparently, one of the interrogators put something down on paper. Carefully Robert widened the crack of the door with his fingers. He looked into a room which might have been Percy Tong's study. There were several Chinese armchairs, an iron stove, and a low table. A portrait of a Chinese general with a drooping mustache hung on the wall. Patricia sat near the door with her back to him. Before her sat two men—soldiers. As their chairs were near the stove they had discarded their tunics and were conducting the inquisition comfortably in shirt-sleeves. Robert saw their faces—enemies. By their well-shaped hands and their fair English he could tell that they were officers.

"Perhaps your name is Miss Matthews?" said the man who was writing things down with a green fountain pen.

Patricia said nothing.

"If your name is Miss Matthews," he went on, "our comrades of the intelligence division in Shanghai know much about you."

"If you are Miss Matthews," said the other man stiffly, "we must shoot you as a spy."

"How are you going to prove it?" There was no trace of fear in Patricia's tone.

"Unfortunately," said the first officer, "we are unable to identify you. That is why we have sent the message to Commander Omura. He is flying up from Hanoi and should be here—" he looked at his watch—"in approximately twelve minutes."

THE enemy had a reputation for being on time. Robert could not afford to waste another second. It was clear what had happened. In his push toward the caravan road the enemy had staged a surprise attack. His troops had occupied the airport and taken Percy Tong's fortress by storm. Possibly Tong's garrison had been tipped off and abandoned the stronghold in the nick of time—the half-filled rice bowls in the mess hall seemed to bear this out. They had found Percy deserted by his men and killed him, and, discovering nothing else worth their attention, returned to their positions around the airport. A special search, carried on by those two bright officers in the other room, had netted Pat. This was where he came in.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said Robert, "for intruding."

He had pushed open the door and stood directly behind Patricia, with Van

Baalen's Mauser leveled at her two inquisitors. For a moment they stared at him as if he had been the spirit of Percy Tong coming to revenge his death in the guise of a fox. The one with the green fountain pen made an instinctive gesture toward the leather holster on his hip. But he thought better of it. Both men got up and raised their hands over their heads.

"Thanks for your cooperation," said Robert. "I appreciate your kindness. This lady will relieve you of your weapons and after that you may sit down again."

Patricia turned and for a fleeting instant he caught the smile in her gray eyes. Then, while the two officers kept their hands upraised, she took the revolvers out of their holsters and went back to Robert's side of the room, holding a weapon in each hand.

"Please do sit down, my friends," said Robert, "and let me explain. There has been a mistake somewhere. This lady's name is not Miss Matthews. She is my wife and I have flown down from Shanghai to obtain her release. You see, the—gentleman in the other room had kidnapped her. He was a very bad man—Mr. Tong. He asked for a high ransom. So what could I do, my friends, but come and pay it. You have been most kind to beat me to it. In fact, your action saved me a great deal of money. And now, if you don't mind, we shall have to leave you."

The two began to splutter something in their own curiously clipped language, but their Asiatic *savoir faire* got the better of them. They too knew the unwritten code of the East that penalized the continuation of an argument beyond the point of defeat. Another word out of them would have meant loss of face. So they shut up and offered no backtalk as Robert proceeded to unwrap their puttees and use them to tie their limbs to their armchairs.

Patricia had not let go of her weapons.

"This is going to hurt a little." Robert took a medical case out of his inner pocket and produced a needle. Swiftly he punctured the top of a vial and, rolling up their shirt-sleeves, administered a hypodermic to each of them. "It was meant," he said to Patricia, "for a member of my own profession—an herb doctor. Just in case. I think you Americans call it a Mickey Finn."

Patricia had not spoken. She looked at him now and Robert saw that her face was pale and tired—too much excitement and too little sleep. Although he still could not fathom her eyes, he thought he could see a new warmth soften her expression.

"If you have come to rescue me," she said, "let's get going. Our Irish friend will be here in a few minutes. I'd rather not see him again."

"I'm ready," said Robert. "Let's get out of here."

HE turned off the light and bolted the door from the living-room. They crossed without looking at the couch, went through the room with the Chippendale secretary, on through the formal reception hall. They left the temple-like structure and hurried over the wooden ghost bridges of the garden, stepped through the moondoor. They rushed through the courtyard with the hurricane lamp and the cricket, stumbled downstairs and were in the total darkness of the tunnel.

Now, as they groped their way toward the exit, they heard steps coming toward them. Short, military steps that rang on the hard ground of the passageway. Robert felt Patricia touch his arm. They stood still, flattening themselves against the wall. The steps came nearer.

With them came the faint shifting gleam of a light. By it they could see that they had reached the point where the passageway turned sharply to the right. Peering around the corner Robert saw that the light was approaching along the opposite wall. It was a small flashlight, pointed on the ground, and it swung with the steps of the person who carried it. Robert's finger was on the trigger of his Mauser.

The steps were directly opposite now. The circle of light was nearing the corner. If the visitor knew the ground, he would turn short. He would bump right into them.

They held their breath.

The circle of light did not swerve—the visitor was heading for the outer corner. No doubt he was a stranger here. Suddenly his steps halted. The rocky wall confronted him. Then his feet turned sharply to the left and resumed their path along the wall.

Now they could have touched the man. In the reflected beam of the flashlight they saw his features: a pair of clever eyes behind glasses, broad cheekbones, a small, slightly turned-up nose, a small black mustache and a firm jaw. Omura.

Exactly what it was that made that clicking sound, Robert never knew. Probably it was one of Patricia's two guns that touched the wall behind her.

The flashlight wheeled around. Robert was in its focus.

"Hello, Doctor," said Omura. His voice betrayed no surprise. "So you've come to keep an old appointment."

Robert felt his pupils narrow. The glaring bulb of the flashlight pointed straight in his face. It blotted out everything else. He did not see the man behind the light.

"I've come to keep an appointment," he said, "with Miss Matthews."

"Miss Matthews, indeed. And do you expect to find her in this mausoleum? How did you guess?"

"No guesswork, Omura. I know she's in here."

"A clairvoyant! It may interest you that I've also come to meet Miss Matthews."

Patricia, a step behind Robert and hidden from Omura's sight by the bend, did not stir.

"Dr. Dumont," Omura spoke very quietly, "I must inform you that you're my prisoner. My men have surrounded this place. If you don't mind!"

The flashlight fluttered ever so slightly. Omura was reaching for his holster.

"Something tells me you are lying, Commander."

Robert had one target before him—the flashlight. He pressed the trigger of his pistol. The explosion was deafening. There was total darkness—he had hit the bulb.

A salvo of shots was the answer. Robert could hear the bullets splatter against the wall. He aimed into the blackness and pressed the trigger again. But there was no discharge. Van Baalen's Mauser was empty.

"Hello, Doctor," said Omura. "So you've come to keep an old appointment."

THERE were Patricia's two guns—probably good for a veritable barrage. Robert dismissed the thought as soon as it crossed his mind. No use shooting at mud walls. Without a sound he glided to the ground and crawled through the dark toward his opponent.

The lack of response must have given Omura the impression that he had scored.

He advanced a few short steps. Then he shot again, way over Robert's head. As there was no answer, he gave a short laugh. Obviously his enemy was *hors de combat.*

Robert reached the heavy leather boots, jumped to his feet.

"This one is on you, Commander!"

His hands found Omura's pistol, wrenched it away and threw it to the ground. Omura hissed a curse—a hard-boiled Anglo-Saxon curse, for his own aseptic language was void of swearwords—and the two men clinched in the total darkness of the tunnel.

It had to be a brief fight. Robert knew just enough about the secret art of jiu-jitsu to realize that it could transform his physical strength into deadweight.

Omura would use whatever tricks he knew. Robert had to see that there would be no chance.

He let go of the other's waist and stood back, then hurled himself upon Omura. But his split-second action failed. Before he could collect his wits, he felt himself lifted over the other man's shoulder and crashed down to the floor like a brick.

Robert struggled to his feet. He regained his balance before Omura could apply the knockout trick that killed. Leaning against the wall, with his head droning, he reached out into the blackness and plunged his fist into Omura's face. Once again. He felt the other hammer his stomach. Then, suddenly, Omura was gone.

For a second Robert was dumbfounded. Had his opponent got away? Or was he out already? He groped his way ahead a few feet without result. Then, Omura was at his neck. The attack came from Robert's left flank and was executed so accurately it almost seemed Omura could see in the dark. Both his hands were around Robert's neck, twisting his shirt collar for a deadly choke. Robert gasped. His hands fumbled for the other's armpits. He found them and, pushing with all his might, broke the grip. Omura tumbled backwards.

Robert did not let go of him. Using his left hand to pin him against the wall, he swung out with his right and struck a final blow at Omura's chin. His fist crashed squarely into his jaw.

Omura wheezed. It was a hoarse and ugly sound. His body sagged, and Robert loosened his grip. When he reached out again, he hit a vacuum. Standing still in the stifling darkness, he heard the muffled sound of a collapsing body.

CHAPTER XI

KUAN YIN—THE CRY OF THE WORLD

HIGH over the pass the sky was turning pale. Sharp gusts, lusty forerunners of morning, brought the smell of far-away valleys. It was the smell of snow, perhaps—but it was of melting snow, surely, and of gray slush turning into a silvery trickle. It was the smell of early spring, being wafted from the far-away valleys and the silent peaks to this mountain pass. Robert and Patricia stood still. They had dismounted and the breathing of their tired horses was the only sound in this great Asiatic loneliness.

"Look! It goes winding down all the way to the horizon."

Below their feet, hard under the precipice on which they stood, lay the caravan road. This was its highest point. Here it traversed the tallest and most forbidding barrier of black rock to descend into the heart of China. It stretched in rolling curves through the valley before them, clinging precariously to almost vertical mountainsides or ribboning leisurely along the narrow bottom. Robert and Patricia saw it reach the height of the pass and slope into the country yonder. They saw it journey into a distant dawn.

Now they were safe. In the titanic battle for a continent, yesterday's skirmish had been an atomic performance. It had not tilted the scales—indeed, it had scarcely made them vibrant. History books would not record it. But in the forlorn moonscape that had become the world of these two, the enemy's sally had wrought important changes. It had shifted the lines marking the positions of friend and foe. Robert and Patricia had crossed the no-man's land between, and for that they had to thank their good luck and their sturdy Mongolian ponies—till yesterday mounts of the Emperor's Army, now booty and rightly theirs as a prize of war.

They were within the Chinese lines. Two hours ago they had reached the outer bastions—concrete pill boxes perching on the steep walls of crevasses, machine-gun posts nesting on inaccessible notches, rifle pits and solid dugouts. Then, farther back, they had passed the gun emplacement with their trench mortars and the precious field pieces of which the Chinese had so few. Those were the lines that must not crack, the lines that guarded this vital strip of winding gravel, the road below.

There had been little life in those positions. After the turbulent action of

the day, the defenders were resting. Robert and Patricia had seen them as they rode past, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion by their silent guns. Now, as the pallor of the sky crept toward the zenith, there was a faint stirring back of them. They looked around. Men were climbing up the mountainside behind them, many men. They straggled up slowly, as under a heavy burden, and they turned to descend along the precipitous mule path that led down toward the road. Robert and Patricia did not see their faces. But they saw their shadows move, saw them stagger up and slowly disappear on their downward trek.

The wounded. The backwash of the battle was ebbing from the front, seeping to the rear. They filed by, as Robert and Patricia looked on in silent awe, some crawling and some walking erect, some being carried on a comrade's back and some on stretchers. It was a grim procession—the sad finale of a Chinese shadowplay. They passed in silence, and more came dragging up as those before them were swallowed by the darkness of the mule path. Already, in the dim light, Robert and Patricia could see the van emerge onto the road below and turn east toward the lighting horizon.

And more came dragging up behind them.

ROBERT took Patricia's hand. Leading their horses by the reins, they went over to the narrow trail along which the shadows came and went. They stood and watched them, an ebbtide of gray-clad humanity that moved on stolidly and sullen, pushed and dragged and shoved by a colossal force . . . the same colossal force that had pushed and dragged and shoved gray columns of humanity across this continent throughout the ages . . . the force that had whipped them from the north to the south, from the mountains to the river, from the river to the coastal plains, from the provinces into the cities, and from the cities into the sea . . . the force that had bullied and crushed them under different names, as War and Pestilence and Flood and Famine and Revolution and Poverty. Now it had come once again. This time its name was War and its whip knew no mercy.

A petty officer sank down by the edge of the trail. The side of his tunic was torn and stiff with blood. As he lay crumpled on the ground, his hands were groping for the canteen at his belt. He managed to unscrew the top and set it to his mouth, tilting its bottom high. It was empty.

Robert bent over him and unbuttoned his tunic. The torn shirt stuck to the lips of a ghastly wound—shrapnel. He had had no care. But the wound was clean and there was no pus. If he received first aid within the next hour, he was likely to pull through. Robert cursed his own helplessness, the impossibility to perform even the simple job of applying antiseptic. He had no medical equipment, no bandages, not even iodine. Looking up at Patricia he saw that she had taken the water bottle from the cinch of her horse. He offered it to the wounded man. The petty officer smiled feebly and shook his head: this people had to be polite and ceremonious even on the threshold of the great unknown. He declined three times before he drank. He drank in painful sips, but he drained the bottle. Then he thanked them in halting Mandarin.

"You need rest," said Patricia, "and a doctor. Where will you find them?"

"There is a hospital twenty-five *li* down the road," said the petty officer. "We hope to reach it before dark."

Before dark! It was not even day yet. The idea that these smitten people would have to march till night to rest their limbs seemed unbearable.

The soldier must have seen their faces fall. "We may find trucks," he added, "that could take us there."

Robert gazed at the men limping by, staggering down the narrow path. How many of them would live through this day?

"You should have hospital units out here—field hospitals and ambulances—many of them."

The soldier shrugged his shoulders. "We know. Like the enemy has. But we

(Continued on page 122)

By the time the sheriff arrived the smoke of six-guns was heavy in the air.

ILLUSTRATED
BY
CHARLES DYE

BADLANDS EMPEROR

By BRUCE NELSON

HIS name was Antoine de Vallombrosa, Marquis de Mores. His dream was to be King of France and cattle baron of the world. Though his grandiose schemes came to nothing, and his Empire has long since crumbled to dust, he remains one of America's most colorful, if obscure, frontier figures. And fantastic as his dreams may appear today, they might well have altered the course of our national history.

Virtually neglected by historians, little is known of his fabulous career save among the handful of people who inhabit that portion of western North Dakota where he once made his home. There, however, he has become a local legend.

A FACT STORY

And well he might.

Tall, slender, with flashing black eyes and the lithe grace of a polished fencer, he might have stepped from the pages of an Alexandre Dumas novel. Duellist, adventurer, financier, diplomat, in all the saga of the frontier, there is no character more steeped in romance and tragedy than this dashing nobleman of France.

Though his career in America encompassed but three short years, and ended before he was thirty years of age, de Mores had in that brief space married a New York heiress to millions; become affiliated with the Mellon brothers in financial enterprises; controlled 8,000,000 acres of grazing land in Dakota Territory; founded the Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company; launched a million-dollar packing plant in the wilderness; established a newspaper, a hotel, and a town of 2,000 people on the frontier; engaged in duels and was acquitted on a charge of murder; and, finally, lost $2,000,000 in a co-operative ranching enterprise in Dakota Territory.

IT WAS in Paris, in 1881, that the handsome young Frenchman met Medora von Hoffman, wealthy New York heiress. The Marquis was no impecunious fortune-hunter. He could trace his family tree back through five hundred years of noble ancestry and he was rich in his own right. It was, rather, a case of love at first sight.

Nor could one blame either of them.

Red-haired Medora von Hoffman was not only wealthy but a charming and beautiful girl. As for the Marquis, aside from his noble birth and unusual good looks, he was a graduate of St. Cyr, the finest swordsman of France, and a veritable gallant in the drawing-room. It was Kismet. No less.

They were married at Cannes, in the "Church of the Stained Glass Window," and in August of 1882 the Marquis and his bride set sail for New York City.

The Marquis' fertile brain was seething with ideas. In this new land, where fabulous fortunes were to be made overnight, he would build up his resources to the point where he could return to France and fulfill his life's ambition—which was to overthrow the French Republic and re-establish the monarchy with himself as king. It was an ambitious project for a man of twenty-six.

In New York, the Marquis' father-in-law, L. A. von Hoffman, invited him to enter the family banking firm and familiarize himself with the American financial world; but the Marquis had other plans. True, he was interested in finance, but it was not in the nature of this dashing young adventurer to content himself with sitting in a counting-house. Furthermore, he was no fool. He knew how much money it took to corrupt an army even in corrupt France. What he wanted was some fabulous project that would return him millions in as brief a time as possible.

Then Fate, in the person of the Marquis' cousin, the Count of Fitz-James, intervened. The Count, like so many adventurous young Europeans of his day, had come to America to enjoy a hunting trip in the wilds of Dakota Territory. Returning to New York, he described the land to the Marquis in glowing terms, elaborating upon the vastness and emptiness of the territory, the abundance of wild game, and the richness of the soil.

The Marquis listened carefully. He, too, was a sportsman and interested in big-game hunting; but there was a deeper motive behind the questions he asked Fitz-James. The Marquis had been studying American business opportunities; and he had become convinced that a great cattle and packing industry, properly managed, would prove a bonanza for its founders. And the Marquis was sure he knew how to manage it.

His scheme, for that day, was breath-taking. It serves, too, to illustrate a facet of the Marquis' quixotic character. Although he was a confirmed Royalist, he was not above converting Socialism to his own uses if it should prove profitable. He was, perhaps, in this venture, the originator of the first large co-operative in America.

His plan was simple. Once he found a suitable range, he would build his packing plants on the spot, slaughter his animals there, ship the frozen meats in his own refrigerator cars to his own markets in the East; and thus avoid the huge cost of shipping live animals halfway across the continent to eastern abattoirs.

In theory, he would be able to undersell the four great packers to such an extent that they would have no choice but to go to the wall. The Marquis would have a corner on the entire industry. It looked good on paper. All he needed was to locate the proper cattle country. As he listened to Fitz-James, the Marquis believed he had found the answer.

IN THE spring of 1883 the Marquis said good-bye to his young bride and departed for the fastnesses of Dakota Territory, ostensibly on a hunting trip; although the actual purpose of the journey was to determine whether the wild land Fitz-James had described to him was suited to his ends.

Moving slowly across the great empty territory the Marquis studied the terrain carefully. It seemed admirably fitted to his needs. As far as the eye could reach, the level grasslands stretched; promising lush, free grazing for the thousands of cattle the Marquis could envision on the green plains. There was abundant water in the prairie creeks and rivers.

Then, on the far western edge of Dakota Territory, he came suddenly upon the awesome grandeur of the Badlands. The Marquis had seen enough.

Smitten by the beauty of the country, he remained for three days, while he made certain of its natural advantages. Everything was there: feed, water, shelter. He took the train next morning for New York, full of his dreams of Empire.

With his own personal fortune, backed by the support of his millionaire father-in-law, the Marquis set about the organization of the National Consumers' Meat Company. He was a good salesman; and, furthermore, there was nothing fundamentally wrong with his idea.

Men like W. R. Grace, Mayor of New York, Banker Eugene Kelly, Brian Lawrence, Alex Patrick Ford, Henry George and various Labor leaders were enthusiastic about the Marquis' plan. Perhaps some of them saw only the "cooperative" side of the project, not recognizing that it had, also, the makings of a very tight little monopoly. But it was a daring idea; and fifty years ahead of its time.

The company was soon organized, with a capital of $10,000,000, divided into a million shares of $10 each. Every shareholder had the privilege of purchasing at the company stores, at lowest prices, whatever meat was necessary for his needs. Gone was the middleman, advertised the shrewd de Mores.

The Marquis took immediate steps toward converting his dream into reality. He completed negotiations with the Northern Pacific Railway and the federal government for the purchase of 45,000 acres of grazing land in western Dakota Territory. A shrewd manipulator, he gerrymandered his 45,000 acres in two long, narrow strips on either side of the Little Missouri River, the only source of water in the country. Thus his acreage effectively controlled 8,000,000 acres of grazing land; for he possessed the water rights. His dominance was reminiscent of the seignorial control of his noble ancestors in the old days of France. And he had got it all for a paltry $32,000.

"I like this country," the Marquis wrote to his bride in New York. "There is room to turn around without stepping on the feet of others."

During the next few months the Marquis was a busy man. Huge cold storage warehouses were constructed in Bismarck, Fargo, Duluth, St. Paul and other cities throughout the northwest. Meat markets were established in Chicago, New York, Boston.

Out on the rangeland itself, the Marquis selected a site close by the east bank of the Little Missouri, cracked a bottle of champagne over an iron tent peg, and christened the new town, "Medora," in honor of the Marquise.

Men, building materials, and machinery poured into the wilderness by the trainload; and within two weeks a boom town of 2,000 people had grown up as if by magic. As operations got into full swing that fall, the Marquis was slaughtering 300 animals a day and his eastern food markets were offering frozen meats at prices ruinous to his competitors. The Marquis was overjoyed. He prepared to settle down and watch the golden flood roll in. The Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company, which the Marquis had founded, carried his wares to every corner of the nation. Things were looking up in the packing business; and the Marquis turned to other interests.

INTO nearby Bismarck, N. D., that year, had come two young Pittsburgh financiers who were immediately attracted by the enterprising Marquis. Their names were Andrew Mellon and R. B. Mellon; and they were buying up hundreds of acres of the rich Dakota prairie lands. They had, also, founded a bank in Bismarck, which had just become the territorial capital.

Like the Marquis, they predicted a great future for the country when the influx of settlers should begin, and together with de Mores they founded the Bismarck Loan and Trust Company.

Late that fall another Easterner dropped off the train near the Marquis' estate—a small, compactly built young gentleman whom the cowboys described to the Marquis as "a four-eyed dude from New York." It was Theodore Roosevelt, come to North Dakota for his health and to forget the recent deaths of his wife and his mother. Roosevelt

was approximately the Marquis' own age and the two saw a good deal of each other. Naturally, both being domineering and opinionated, they did not always agree; but Roosevelt was a frequent guest at the sprawling 28-room château which the Marquis had erected as a frontier home for his Marquise.

The "four-eyed dude from New York" was something of a prairie politician even then. He was but twenty-eight years of age when the following item appeared in the Dickinson, N. D., *Press* in 1886:

> The first Fourth of July celebration attempted in Dickinson took place last Monday. . . . The train from the west brought a number of Medora people. Amongst them was the Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, the orator of the day. The program consisted of a Parade, Address by the Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, Races, Fire Works, and a dance in the evening.

On at least one occasion, the Marquis came very near changing the course of American history by becoming embroiled with "Teddy" in a frontier feud. Angered at a reported unfriendly action of the future president, de Mores sent a courier with a message to Roosevelt, hinting darkly that in his own country such differences were settled on the field of honor. If he intended to bluff the "four-eyed dude from New York" the gesture was a failure; for his messenger soon returned with the information that the "dude" would follow within the hour armed with a rifle—and for the Marquis to be ready for the consequences.

For once, though, the fiery Marquis used his head. The quarrel was nothing more than a misunderstanding, scarcely worth the shedding of blood, and the Marquis had a servant meet Roosevelt with an invitation to "come and have coffee instead," an invitation that "Teddy" readily accepted.

It was no lack of courage on the Marquis' part that prompted his action, however. In France he had twice killed opponents in duels before he was twenty-five years of age. And had he chosen to see the matter through, there is little doubt that the brash young man from New York would have been a casualty in any such encounter.

Fortunately, perhaps, for the future history of the nation, Roosevelt and the Marquis laughed the matter away; and remained good friends during the remainder of their careers in the Badlands, as well as later in the East. The original challenge had been prompted by false information given the Marquis by an employee—and he was only too glad to learn that the yourg "dude" from New York was really his friend instead of his enemy.

Incidentally, it is to the Marquis de Mores and not Theodore Roosevelt that we are indebted for the expression, "Rough Riders." In 1883 the Marquis constructed a frontier hotel, which he called by that name; and it stands in the little village of Medora to this day. Roosevelt stopped there on more than one occasion; and some fifteen years later, when seeking a name for his famous cavalry troop, he doubtless recalled the name of the Marquis' Badlands frontier hostelry.

De Mores, meanwhile, with his dream of Empire constantly before his eyes, branched out into new fields. He founded a newspaper, "The Badlands Cowboy," the masthead of which announced belligerently that it was published "not for fun, but for $2 a year." When the Black Hills gold fields to the south began to boom, he organized an overland stage route that connected with the Northern Pacific Railway at Medora. To help build up the country, he purchased 20,000 acres of wheat land near Bismarck and offered it tax-free for a year to any settlers who would locate there. In Medora he built a church, a school, and a general store to care for his employees and their families.

BY THE summer of 1884 the Marquis' activities had reached huge proportions. He sheared 14,000 sheep and grazed tens of thousands of cattle. His competitors were groaning under the lash of his price schedules. But already the storm clouds were gathering—the precursors of a hurricane that was to blow to bits the Marquis' gigantic Empire.

On the surface, though, everything

was tranquil. The Marquis and his attractive wife held open house at their big château, staffed by a retinue of French servants. Eastern blue bloods and foreign titled gentry spent gay summers there daneing, drinking, hunting, and riding, while local citizens looked on askance. The Marquis, mannered and dashing in any environment or situation, presided with equal poise as host to visiting diplomats or as guide on the wild prairies. Nor was the Marquise at all out of her element in the new country, as witness the following item, which appeared in the Bismarck *Tribune* of September 4, 1885:

> The Marquise, wife of Marquis de Mores, has returned from her hunt in the Rocky Mountains, where she killed two cinnamon bears and one large grizzly bear. The accomplished lady, who was a few years ago one of New York City's popular society belles, is now the queen of the Rocky Mountains and the champion huntress of the great northwest.

The Marquis, though, had never been popular with his neighbors. The ranchers resented his bland assumption of superiority, his wealth, his titled friends. Many doubted his claims to nobility. Or, if they did believe, considered it an affront to their own open-handed democracy.

But, worst of all, the Marquis began to fence his lands. Owning the water rights, he had the smaller cattlemen completely at his merey; and it was a grave breach of range etiquette, in those days, to deprive a neighbor of water or feed for his stock. The stage was set for serious trouble. . . .

It was a lawless land, the Dakota Territory of that period. The Northern Pacific Railway, which in 1883 drove its Golden Spike in commemoration of the spanning of a continent, had to ask for United States troops to protect its track workers from hostile Indians near Medora, in the heart of the Marquis' Empire.

Perhaps apocryphal, but nevertheless reflecting the spirit of the times, are the stories concerning the first appearances of the train in the territory. Hard-boiled cowhands, French-Canadian fur traders, stolid, blanket-wrapped redskins all gathered to witness the phenomenon of the Iron Horse. And to gape at the "dudes" from the East in their quaint hats and sissified clothes.

It was the sight of his first derby hat that proved too much for Hell-Roaring Bill Jones, one of the tough and leathery oldsters who punched cattle in the Medora vicinity. A meek old gentleman, crowned with a broad-brimmed derby, had descended from the train at the Medora station for a timid peep at the new, wild country.

Hell-Roaring Bill took one look, let out a snort of disgust, and promptly blasted the old gentleman's hat from his head with a fusillade from the six-gun he habitually wore on his hip. The old gentleman, needless to say, scampered back into the train, leaving his riddled headgear on the station platform.

But Hell-Roaring Bill was not satisfied. "Come back here and get it, you so-and-so," he thundered. "We don't want the goddam thing in Medora!"

On other occasions, for the edification of the dudes on the train, the cowhands would let loose a barrage of gunfire inside the saloon across from the station. Then, while horrified Easterners stared from the train windows, a half-dozen or so limp bodies would be carried out and stacked beside the saloon door. The corpses, of course, always came to life after the train had pulled out. But, from the stories that later appeared in eastern papers, the spectacle was not without a certain macabre fascination.

"Gee, Mister," said a pop-eyed eastern youth after witnessing one of these apparently bloody engagements, "how often do they kill people out here, anyway?"

The ruffian on the station platform to whom the question was addressed ruminated for a time. Then, shifting his "chaw" from one cheek to the other, he arched a stream of brown liquid through the air and fixed the lad with a wintry eye.

"Only once, sonny," he muttered darkly.

There was gunplay, though, and plenty of it, that did not have its sources in the crude risibilities of bored cowhands. The six-shooter was still the

"equalizer" of the plains; and he was considered a spineless citizen who depended too much on the intervention or the protection of the law.

WHEN the Marquis began to fence his lands, the reaction was prompt and direct. The offended ranchers got out their wire-cutters and slashed the fences to ribbons. Harsh words passed on both sides. The Marquis had his fences restrung and the ranchers immediately had them cut again. The situation was becoming tense.

Then, one day, three cowmen, filled to the neckerchiefs with "red likker," began shooting up the town of Medora as a gesture of protest against the Marquis' violations of the range code. Bullets were fired into several of the town buildings and into the Marquis' nearby château.

In the Mandan *Pioneer* of June 26, 1883, appeared this brief item:

> At an early hour this morning a telegram was received from the Marquis de Mores calling for an armed posse to go to Little Missouri on the first train as the town was in the hands of a gang of desperadoes who were committing all sorts of depredations. The hotel has been shot full of bullet holes and it is feared that there may be much bloodshed if help is not secured immediately. The sheriff has been notified and will take prompt action. The origin of the trouble seems to be that the Marquis had fenced in some land that hunters objected to and they had torn down the fences.

The sheriff, true to his word, took the next train for Medora; and the Marquis, together with several employees, set out for the station to meet him. On the way, the party was ambushed by three gunmen. By the time the sheriff arrived, the smoke of six-guns was heavy in the air and one of the gunmen lay dead on the ground. Another had a broken leg. The Marquis' clothing had several bullet holes through it; but he and the other men were unhurt.

The countryside was up in arms over the incident. The Marquis was unpopular, a foreigner in a strange land; and, it must be admitted, a haughty nobleman who despised these cattlemen as *canaille*. In other circumstances the matter might have been overlooked; for it was clearly a case of self-defense. But feeling against the Marquis was too bitter. He was arrested on a charge of first-degree murder.

The case attracted nationwide attention. Editorial opinion was variegated but in no sense restrained. The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* declared patriotically that "de Mores is a titled land pirate and a brigandish foreigner and for smaller offenses than his, better men have tasted the high gallows and the short shrift of frontier justice."

The Minneapolis *Tribune* came to the Marquis' defense; and prophesied that the *Post-Dispatch* would find itself defendant in a libel suit if it persisted in such attacks. The St. Paul *Pioneer-Press* told its readers that this was not the first time the fiery Marquis had been in trouble; and described his quarrels with "Theodore Roosevelt, the New York politician who owns an immense cattle ranch near Medora."

The storm of bitter feeling sobered even the haughty Marquis. He began to see how heartily disliked he had been in certain quarters; and though he could have been free under bond he preferred to await his trial in custody, where he would be safe from overly-enthusiastic friends of the dead cattlemen.

His stay in jail, though, could not have been without interest; for his jailer was Alexander McKenzie, colorful frontier figure who was later to be characterized villain in Rex Beach's Alaskan novel, "The Spoilers." McKenzie, who was sheriff at the time, returned to North Dakota after his brief Alaskan career and, until his death in 1922, was undisputed political boss of the state.

The Marquis' trial was packed with frontier drama. Altercations and physical encounters marked its progress. At one point the proceedings had to be postponed, when the prosecuting attorney was committed to jail for contempt of court. The spectators, for the most part, were hostile; and when the Marquis was finally acquitted there were ugly rumors of bribery and miscarried justice. When the Marquis left the courtroom after his acquittal, a friend slipped him

a revolver, in case his enemies might attempt to take what they thought was justice into their own hands.

SLAUGHTERING at the Medora plant had been suspended during the Marquis' trial; and a few hours after his acquittal he received a telegram from a director of the company:

> When will I be able to advise my clients that we will start operations again?

At the telegram office the Marquis hastily scribbled the following reply:

> C. W. Sleeper,
> Medora, D. T.
> Will resume killings as soon as I can give it my personal attention.
> de Mores

The Marquis' attorney, F. B. Allen, scanned the telegram and advised the Marquis dryly that he had better put it in his pocket and write another—one that might not be misunderstood by the gun-toting Medora cattlemen. The Marquis chuckled and took Allen's advice, saving the first message for a souvenir.

The multiple forces which were to overthrow and destroy the Marquis' mighty Empire were gathering momentum as spring came again to the Badlands. Of those forces, some were defects inherent in the character of the Marquis himself; some were simply unavoidable physical factors; and others, more sinister, sprang from the scheming brains of the Marquis' baronial competitors.

De Mores, although intelligent and a man of broad vision, was foolhardy, impetuous, and egotistical. Furthermore, he was scrupulously honest, a quality not particularly to one's advantage in the days before the trust-busting Roosevelt came into power. The Marquis, himself, in later years enjoyed telling how he was fleeced by poker-faced ranchers who would sell him a herd of cattle, run the herd around a butte, and re-sell them to him a second and third time.

Such small-time tactics as these, however, could not have wrecked an Empire the size of the Marquis'. It was only when the mighty forces of the great packing companies began to array themselves against him that his huge structure tottered and crashed finally in ruins.

The Marquis was no match for the determined (and not alway honest) competition he began to meet. He was young, inexperienced in the devious ways of corporate finance and tactics, and in certain respects incredibly naïve.

How it started nobody seemed to know; but in the second year of the Marquis' enterprise people began to get the idea that his frozen meats were dangerous. It was hinted at in eastern papers both commercially and editorially and the whispering campaign began to take its toll among the Marquis' customers.

Furthermore, secret freight rebates were being granted to the Marquis' competitors—a circumstance which did not become public until long afterward. Next, the big packing companies, with resources far greater than de Mores could command, turned on a terrific under-selling campaign. Their losses must have been huge; but they could stand it longer than could the unhappy Frenchman. The battle could have but one result. The Marquis' Empire began to crumble.

There were, besides, several legitimate reasons for de Mores' difficulties. He had plunged into the business on too great a scale. Likewise, his grass-fed beef was not as firm and palatable as grain-fed stock. Since he could slaughter only six months of the year, when the cattle were fat, his huge plant stood idle half of the time, while overhead and salaries went merrily on. It was inevitable that he should encounter difficulties in a business that could operate only part-time. And, last but not least, he committed the cardinal sin of importing sheep into a cattle country. It was a rash move. The cattlemen were outraged and the sheep were poisoned by the hundreds.

IN 1886, after three years, the Marquis saw that his venture was doomed. But he fulfilled every one of his contracts, repaid all stockholders, and closed his

plant with a loss to himself of almost $2,000,000. Despite his disappointment he was not bitter. He knew that he was advocating economic and social ideas far ahead of his day; and he still had faith in the fundamental soundness of his plan.

He hoped that where he had failed, another might succeed. And this generous, quixotic Frenchman, abandoning his plant and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment, placed a sign on the door of the building where his dream of Empire lay buried: Rent free to any responsible party who will make use of it.

The building stood empty, though, until 1907, when it was destroyed by fire; and all that remains of the once great plant is a lonely yellow brick chimney in the village of Medora. Other packers, however, have followed in the Marquis' footsteps; and their success in North Dakota has proved he was not the impractical dreamer he was then considered to be.

His schemes of fabulous fortune in America shattered, the Marquis returned to France for a brief period; but his shrewd promoter's brain was constantly at work. On a hunting trip to India the following year he was struck by the lack of modern industrial development in the interior of the Far East. He hit upon the idea of building a railroad from Tonkin, China, into the undeveloped back country and creating another huge Empire such as the one that had failed in Dakota.

Never one to delay matters once his mind was made up, the Marquis organized his enterprise and actually began construction of the railroad that same year. But this dream, too, like so many others, was foredoomed to failure. Governmental interference forced him to abandon his ambitious project before the road was completed; and in 1889 he returned to France by way of the United States.

He stopped at the lonely château in Medora for a brief hunting trip—the last time he was destined to view his American holdings. He was tired; and more than a little doubtful whether he was ever to succeed in building the fortune he needed to achieve his ambition. But six weeks hunting in the hills revived him. Like Roosevelt, the Marquis was curiously exhilarated by that fantastic country.

"Hell with the fires out!" That was what General Sully called the Badlands back in 1864, when he led his United States cavalry through the treacherous gullies and tumbled buttes. But the general when he delivered that emphatic judgment, was a sick man, jolting over the twisted earth in a military wagon.

The hostile Sioux who were sniping at his flanks had more imagination. In the picturesque imagery of their own tongue they had named the land, "Place where the hills look at each other."

But neither Sully nor the Siouan tongue is responsible for the present name of that land of incredible ugliness and beauty. It was, rather, the footsore French trappers who were destined to label the hills for posterity. To them, it was *la mauvaise terre à traverser*, bad lands to travel through, and that name, in briefer form, it bears to this day.

Herman Hagedorn, biographer of Theodore Roosevelt, has penned a graphic description of the country which the Marquis de Mores and his illustrious neighbor found so intriguing:

> Between the prairie lands of North Dakota and the prairie lands of Montana there is a narrow strip of broken country so wild and fantastic in its beauty that it seems as though some unholy demon had carved it to mock the loveliness of God. On both sides of a sinuous river rise ten thousand buttes cut into bizarre shapes by the waters of countless centuries. The hand of man never dared to paint anything as those hills are painted. Olive and lavender, buff, brown, and dazzling white mingle with emerald and flaming scarlet to make a piece of savage splendor that is not without an element of the terrible. The buttes are stark and bare. Only in the clefts are ancient cedars, starved and deformed. In spring there are patches of green grass, an acre here, a hundred acres there, reaching up the slopes from the level bottom-land; but there are regions where for miles and miles no green thing grows, and all creation seems a witch's cauldron of gray bubbles tongued with flame, held by some bit of black art forever in suspension.

Not a restful land, precisely, but it had a soothing effect upon the Marquis'

ambition-ridden nerves; and he spent the time profitably in laying plans for the future. He determined to go at once to France and enter the political field, which at the time was seething with turmoil.

The scandal of the Dreyfus case was soon to reach its height; and the Marquis cleverly played upon the emotional unrest brought about by its disclosures. The methods by which he hoped to establish himself as head of the government are curiously reminiscent of the tactics employed by present-day dictators.

To the horror and great displeasure of his family, the Marquis supported the Socialist cause, started a newspaper which attacked Jews as the root of all evil, and in general comported himself after the fashion of a shrewd and scheming demagogue.

Although he probably felt little genuine sympathy for the masses, he made himself immensely popular by advocating a housing program for the underprivileged and by publicizing governmental graft and corruption.

IN 1893 he was among the formidable forces which defeated Clemenceau for the Chamber of Deputies; and the following year, when the Dreyfus case burst upon a shocked populace, the Marquis did not hesitate to make political capital of its implications. As a sideline, and just to keep his hand in, he spitted several particularly obnoxious enemies on his sword in the course of a half-dozen duels.

But the petty bickering of partisan politics could not hold for long the interest of the dynamic Marquis. Nor did he consider the skewering of fat politicians a fitting sport for a nobleman. His mind turned once more to high adventure; and he conceived the plan of organizing all Africa, together with France, into a vast Franco-Islamic alliance in opposition to the expanding British Empire.

It was as though the Marquis, who grasped at life like an eager child, sensed that he carried within himself the seeds of his own destruction. He was, seemingly, never more content than when he was pulling the whiskers of death. Certainly he could not have chosen a more dangerous project than the one he now espoused.

He was supported in this venture by a considerable clique in France who actually believed the alliance possible. It has been charged, too, though never absolutely verified, that there were interests who were glad to get the Marquis out of the country because of his inside knowledge of the Dreyfus case. And certainly there were interests in England

"Riley Grannan's Last Adventure"

This is the classic of funeral sermons—the sermon delivered in a burlesque theater in Rawhide, Nevada, by Herman W. Knickerbocker, the busted preacher-prospector, over the body of Riley Grannan, the dead-broke gambler.

ADVENTURE has ordered a large reprint of this famous booklet. The price is ten cents.

Adventure
205 East 42nd Street
New York, N. Y.

Please send me.....copies of "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure."
I am enclosing.....cents. (10c in stamps or coin for each copy desired.)

.....
Name

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Street Address

.....
City or Town State

who had no desire to see his scheme bear fruit.

Whatever the facts of the case may be, it proved to be the Marquis' last and most fantastic adventure into the field of international politics. He was slain in the desert by Touareg tribesmen; and the hand that yearned for the scepter of Empire was stilled forever. Into his thirty-eight years he had crowded the light and color of a dozen lifetimes. And, had he set the stage himself, this swashbuckling French gallant could have invented no more romantic *dénouement* to his checkered career than that furnished him by Fate: death on the northern African sands at the hands of yelling desert tribesmen, in the midst of dark international intrigue.

The disinclination of the French government to take any action in the Marquis' unexplained fate is part of the mystery that shrouds the exact manner of his death. His widow, the Marquise, refused to credit the story that the Touareg tribesmen were alone responsible. When the government refused to act, she posted a huge reward herself; and eventually two of the murderers were apprehended. They were to be given the death penalty; but so certain was the Marquise that they were but dupes that she had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. The true story remains shrouded in obscurity.

In the summer of 1903, the Marquise and her two eldest children, Louis and Athenais, made a last pilgrimage to the Marquis' abandoned American Empire. The Marquise spent several weeks in the lonely château where two of her children had been born and where she and the dashing Marquis had spent three happy and eventful years. It was her last journey to America. She died in France in 1921 from injuries received while she was a nurse during the Great War.

The château, as it stands today, is symbolic of a peculiar vein of romanticism in the Marquis' character. Though it has been untenanted since the time when he and the Marquise lived there with a retinue of French servants more than fifty years ago, it remains exactly as it was in the days before his dreams crumbled to dust.

Until 1936, when Duc Louis de Vallombrosa, eldest son of the Marquis, transferred the property to the North Dakota State Historical Society, the Marquis or his descendants always maintained a caretaker at the deserted château. Its antique furniture, its chests of costly damasks and silver, its ancient wine cellar wait still in ghostly readiness for the occupants who will never come. Maintained by the Historical Society, it stands there on the bleak Dakota prairie in lonely grandeur—the only concrete remnant of de Mores' once-mighty Empire. An empty symbol of the fabulous Marquis' empty dreams.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

THREE new recruits this month to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade and two faces that haven't been seen at the *Camp-Fire* for a good many years to welcome back. We'll call the roll in that order.

B. B. Fowler, who whets our taste for cod on page 40, introduces himself and his story thuswise—

> Like our hero, I'm a herrin'-choker by birth. Served overseas with Canadian Expeditionary Forces in last war. Following the war started writing and lecturing.
>
> After a brief newspaper career became full time free-lance writer. Have written for a wide range of magazines including SATURDAY EVENING POST, COLLIERS, AMERICAN, LIBERTY, READERS DIGEST, etc., filling in with three books on sociology and economics. Got acquainted with Newfoundland when the government there called me in for a job of teaching, lecturing and advising on economics and sociology. My particular hobby has been consumers' cooperatives.

JOE ABRAMS, who gives us the amazing adventure of Igor the Bug this month, writes from Oklahoma where he is busy with things other than stories these days.

Introducing himself briefly on USO stationery, he says—

I was born in Fort William, Ontario, Canada and came to the States when I was three years old. There is a period of twelve years of which there is not much to say except that I went to school, had very little to do with girls, and batted clean-up on a sandlot baseball team.

When I was sixteen my father bought me a typewriter. I determined to teach myself to type using the touch system. After a short time I could bang out "Now is the time for all good men . . ." and very little else. So I wrote a short story, more as a typing exercise than as a literary effort. It sold!

Since that time I continued to write, but that story was beginner's luck. Editors maintained a cold disdain for my work for about a dozen years, and then at last relented.

My education consists of a couple of years at the University of Michigan and thousands of hours in Carnegie libraries throughout the country.

The idea for "The Way of a Cossack" occurred to me when I began worrying about the "little people" in war. What would a man do if he had no training in combat, was not an expert marksman, was no physical giant, or the world's greatest swordsman? What would he do if he came face to face with the enemy? What if his only weapon was a burning love for his country and a consuming hatred for tyranny? "The Way of a Cossack" is the result of that line of thought.

In July of 1942 I volunteered for serv-

ice in the army and at present am stationed in the Field Artillery Replacement Training Center at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, bearing the insignia of Buck Private, United States Army. I don't know what army I'd rather be a buck private in.

My wife is in Chicago looking forward to the day when Shicklegruber and Hirohito will have received their just rewards (certainly not in Heaven) and we can resume a normal existence.

So are we, Joe, so that, among other things, writers like yourself can get on with their writing instead of having to divert their energies to other channels just when things are looking up. Which, we seem to recall, is one of the main things we're fighting for. Right? Best of luck in the job you're doing now—and we'll be watching for whatever rolls out of the typewriter when it's cleaned up and you're mustered out.

BEN T. YOUNG, like most recruits to *Adventure's* Writers' Brigade, has had a colorful background and knows whereof he writes from first-hand experience. The author of "Baton in His Knapsack" sounds as if he were the kind of guy who should have been warming his toes at *Camp-Fire* long before this—

After studying architecture at the University of Illinois I entered the Army as a lieutenant of infantry, serving at several eastern and midwestern posts and attending several service schools. In France, in 1918-19, I served both as a staff officer and company commander.

Later, for a number of years I practiced architecture in Chicago, spending every available hour and dollar on camping, fishing and hunting trips from the Adirondacks to northern Rockies.

Ten years ago, tiring of cities and drawing boards, I moved to a log cabin in Wyoming's Big Horn Mountains and began free-lance writing—when time could be spared from riding, trout fishing, bird shooting, big-game hunting, and prowling about the many forts and other historical spots along the old Bozeman Trail. The deep ruts of that trail were still visible across my pasture and into Wolf Creek. At that time I wrote only non-fiction on horses, guns, camp gear, and their use, for such publications as *The Spur, The Sportsman, Horse and Horseman, Field and Stream* and various others.

Later, coming to New Mexico, I established a small rancho in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Santa Fé, building the adobe house myself with the help of three Mexicans. Here, I started writing fiction—stories of the old and present West, historical tales and yarns of hunting and fishing.

The characters and situations in "Baton in His Knapsack" are recollections of my Army days.

WE ARE mighty pleased this month to be able to welcome back to the ranks of our *Ask Adventure* experts Lieutenant Harry E. Rieseberg, who will reply to queries on sunken treasure, treasure ships, deep-sea diving, salvage and search, salvage devices and equipment.

He left us in 1935, having covered those fields for us for many years, to engage in expedition and salvage operations in remote waters where, away for months at a time, he could no longer devote attention to *Adventure* inquiries. He has just devised a new method for raising U-boat sunk merchantmen from depths heretofore never dared in salvage operations. It is a 520-foot gigantic floating drydock pontoon with huge grapplers capable of penetrating to depths of 3,000 feet.

Lieutenant Rieseberg's currently popular book, "I Dive For Treasure," now in its fourth printing, should be on the must list of any *Adventure* reader who ever yearned to comb the bottom of the sea for the fabulous fortunes in bullion that litter it. Rieseberg has actually made the dream come true and tells you how he did it in as exciting an account as we have read in many a moon. *(Robert M. McBride. $2.75)*

JAMES FRANCIS DWYER, who has been absent from these pages since November 1918, too long by any calculation, wrote in the letter which accompanied his story in this issue—

I am just getting back to writing after our French misfortune. We stayed with the French till they cracked, then ran for the Spanish Frontier. Got over twenty-four hours before the German tanks reached Hendaye. I had been

blasting Hitler in the French papers, CANDIDE and GRINGOIRE for some years, and was fool enough to write a frightful blast against him in the Bordeaux papers a few days before the French gave up. We lost home, furniture, books, and a large quantity of French bonds that we were not permitted to take out of the country.

WE ASKED Brian O'Brien how much of "Palm-Oil Patriot" was fact and how much fiction and particularly how sure he was that U-boats could run on palm oil. Here's what he answered—

Sure they can! Experiment has shown that even gasoline can be made from vegetable oils. In fact there are refineries on the West African Coast now that are busy preparing peanut oils and palm oils for Diesel engines.

The Trans-Sahara Railroad, which, by the way, was started long before this war, is using peanut oil for fuel in its engines. It is actually called the Peanut Line.

In 1938—there have been no figures since—Vichy French West Africa alone produced enough peanuts to make over two hundred million gallons of good fuel oil. The same year they produced over a million gallons of palm oil and ten million gallons of palm nut oil.

And that year the Vichy government begged the French African colonies to increase their production as much as possible. Since the blockade, it has been impossible to get that oil to European markets for use in soap, food and cosmetics. Much of it has rotted in African warehouses. But most of it has not been wasted. Palm oil is the chief native industry on the coast.

The natives, who only vaguely know about the war, cannot distinguish between Nazi and Ally. All are white to them, and therefore beings to be obeyed.

How easy for the Nazis to appoint agents along the coasts to collect oil against the quiet visits of marauding U-boats.

The Spanish and Portuguese colonies, rich in oils, are packed with Nazi agents or half-caste workers who will do anything for the promise of gold, even Nazi gold. The background of Mr. Leeds' story is authentic and founded on fact.

BRUCE NELSON, whose "Badlands Emperor" forms a chapter from his forthcoming history of the Bad Lands in book form, as did his "Scalp Scoop"—the account of the newspaper coverage of the Custer fight back in the April '42 issue—appends the following additional sidelight on the *mores* (no pun intended!) of the period.

Some of the *Camp-Fire* followers might be interested in a first-hand glimpse of a frontier trial as it was conducted in the Marquis de Mores' day, with none other than Hell-Roaring Bill Jones officiating as deputy. The following account was written by A. C. Huiderkoper, an old-time rancher who founded the famous HT brand, and concerns the trial of a rustler in Medora. The only lawyer available was one Simpson, who had recently been disbarred; but who, quite undaunted, sat on the "courthouse" steps outside and defended his client through an intermediary. Here is the oldtimer's account, and I swear I haven't altered a line:

"The trial of the rustler was held in Medora. There was great excitement over it. I think Judge Winchester of Bismarck was to preside. The court was held in a schoolroom, there being no courthouse at the time. The cowboys all came in their boiled shirts. Hell-Roaring Bill Jones marshalled them for instructions.

" 'Now,' he says, 'don't sit there like a lot of stiffs. Look as if you were alive. I am going to put a pitcher of water with a tumbler on the desk for the Judge. We always do that in New York. There ain't no whiskey in the pitcher so you don't need to sample it. Now I'm going over to meet the Judge; when he comes in you all stand up, and don't sit down until the Judge sits. That's the way we do it in New York (sic!).'

"The Judge arrived and seemed much impressed with his reception. He congratulated them on their intelligent appearance and impressed upon them the responsibilities that some of them would be called upon to assume as jurors, a duty that he hoped they would discharge without fear or favor. Bill Jones said afterward 'I thought that the Judge would have strangled when he said such stuff to a damned lot of boobs.'

"The jury was empaneled, the evidence taken. Simpson couldn't come into the courtroom. He sat on the steps outside and coached his legal associate from there.

His instructions were to object to everything that the other side did. After

the witnesses had finished, the lawyers delivered their fiery, frothing addresses and the Judge gave his charge, and then said: 'Mr. Jones, do you have a proper place where the jury can retire for consultation and not be approached?' Bill replied: 'I have, Your Honor. I've been in New York and I know all about these things.' So the jury filed solemnly out.

"Bill took them to the barroom, ordered everybody out of the room except the bartender, whom he warned to have no conversation with the jury, then ordered the bartender to sling out a drink for the jury and charge it up to the County.

"The foreman of the jury, after he had had his drink, suggested that they return to the court and 'get this thing over,' but Bill said no. 'Well,' said the foreman, 'we have already convicted him.'

" 'I know that,' said Hell-Roaring Bill. 'I heard you decide that he was guilty on the way over here; but you've got to put up a bluff at chewing the rag before you go back or the Judge will think you don't know nothing—and, by God, you don't!' One of the jury wanted to know how long they would have to stay. 'Well,' said Bill, 'I couldn't let you go in less than half an hour.'

" 'Can we smoke and drink while we're waiting?'

" 'Yes,' said Bill. 'You can smoke and liquor up at your own expense, but I got to get you back sober.'

"At the end of half an hour, the bartender was ordered to sling another drink at the expense of the County, and Bill instructed them as follows: 'When you fellers get back that reading-and-writing feller will say—Gentlemen, have you agreed on a verdict? Then you, Bob, as foreman, will say—We have. Then he will look at you other fellers and say—So say all of you? Then don't say anything, but bob your heads.'

"After the verdict was announced, Simpson's associate rushed out to announce the result. 'I knew he was guilty,' says Simpson, 'but go back and take an appeal. Tell the Judge that you have two very important witnesses that were held up by high water and couldn't get here.' The appeal was taken under advisement, and the court was adjourned after a short congratulatory address by the Judge."

Whether the County ever paid for Hell-Roaring Bill's generosity toward the jury, I don't know; but, at any rate, the majesty of Justice had been upheld, and law had come to Medora.

That was the same Hell-Roaring Bill Jones who later became sheriff and under whom T. R., "the four-eyed dude from the East" served as deputy for a term.

We have had, for many years, a rather warm personal interest in Medora, owing to the fact that a maternal uncle, Con Short, has ranched cattle and horses in the Bad Lands there for more than forty years and a cousin whom we have never met is now following his father's footsteps there in the same career. While we have never managed to visit the region or get acquainted with our Dakota relatives we have been brought up on stories of the Marquis de Mores, Hell-Roaring Bill Jones and other characters of their time and know that some of the same cowboys employed by de Mores and T. R. worked later on Uncle Con's ranch. If we recall correctly, portions of Roosevelt or de Mores holdings were incorporated in his property, and he acquired one of their brands.

Bringing the de Mores saga further up to date Mr. Nelson encloses a clipping from the Bismarck, N. D. *Tribune* of Sept. 29, 1941, which we quote herewith—

> Quaint old red roofed Chateau de Mores, high on the bluff overlooking Medora in North Dakota Bad Lands, may again be home to the son of a French adventurer who built the rambling structure 58 years ago.
>
> In 1938 the Duc de Vallombrosa, French artillery major who witnessed the tragic fall of France and the only son of Marquis de Mores, turned over to the state of North Dakota a deed to the property which his father once envisioned as headquarters for an inland cattle empire.
>
> Major de Vallombrosa de Mores was assured Monday by Russell Reid, North Dakota historical society superintendent, that the chateau would become the permanent home of the French officer if he so desired.
>
> Shunning publicity, the 57-year-old French nobleman stepped off a train in Bismarck last week after requesting Reid to keep his presence unknown to North Dakotans.
>
> He wanted most to visit the Bad Lands chateau and the peaceful little town of Medora which was named for his mother and where a bronze statue perpetuates

the memory of his father who dropped a million dollars in an ill-fated attempt to establish an immense meat packing-refrigerator plant in North Dakota's cattle country.

He wasn't interested in answering questions or attracting curious crowds. The major believed North Dakotans knew as well as he the reasons for the fall of France and he didn't wish to be considered a refugee. He still retains numerous interests in America, despite those he lost in France.

The duc's Parisian town house and a country estate near the Spanish border are under Nazi control. Another estate near Cannes in Free France has only a lone caretaker and he doesn't know when there might be German occupation of that territory.

The Bad Lands home of his parents is about all that is left of the de Mores' "free soil" holdings and the state has agreed by contract to turn the old home over to him upon request.

It recently has been opened to the public after a long work program when the picturesque building was renovated and put in shape as in those days when the marquis and marquise first established their Medora residence in 1883.

After inspecting the chateau the major remarked to Reid, "It's far more than I expected. It is lovely. It has all been built up—restored. In France things are so different—it's torn down and everything is so uncertain."

He expects to spend at least the winter in America, California for the most part. The major left Switzerland a little over a month ago, coming to the United States on the *West Point* which returned American consulates from embattled countries after bringing to the European continent a load of Axis embassy officials.

The major left his only son in France. He is Anton de Vallombrosa de Mores, connected with the French artillery and he now takes orders from the Vichy government. Before capitulation of France, the duc was sent to a Switzerland resort because of ill health.

Talking with Reid, Major de Vallombrosa said he sat at dinner beside President Roosevelt in 1936 and the first thing the president asked was, "Well, how are things at Medora?"

His mother, the former Medora von Hoffman, daughter of a New York banker, was a girlhood friend of the late Sara Delano Roosevelt, mother of the president.

ON THE theory that confession is good for the soul not only of individuals but magazines as well, we blush with collective embarrassment and docket herewith the sad case of the major's maple leaves. Witness—

August 7, 1942

Adventure, Gentlemen:

I have just read the current issue of *Adventure*, an unusually good one to me, and in reading "Gold Standard" by E. Hoffmann Price (top page 27) he mentions the golden *maple* leaves of the major, a Nazi posing as an American officer.

In a novel I read not so long ago this insignia was also described as a maple leaf.

I had always thought they were *oak* leaves—conventional. As a matter of fact, I myself was proud to wear golden oak leaves on my uniform as a Major and Surgeon in the Spanish-American War.

For forty-four years I always thought they were *oak* leaves but here comes along Mr. Price, a graduate of West Point, who refers to them as *maple* leaves.

The matter of course is of no importance, however I should like to know who is right.

Very truly yours,
Henry Wallace, M.D.,
New York City, N. Y.

Woe is us! And woe, too, apparently, is Author Price, to whom we hastily passed along Doctor Wallace's letter and the proverbial "buck," leaving him to squirm out as best he might. Here's his reply to the observant and justly outraged medico—

Redwood City, California

Dear Doctor Wallace:

You are right, and I am wrong: according to a 1941 Soldiers Manual, published by the *Infantry Journal*, a major wears golden *oak* leaves, and not maple leaves, as I erroneously stated in my yarn in *Adventure*. While I regret being wrong, I am glad to have this called to my attention.

I do not like alibis, and I offer none. If you were to ask how I came to make this boner, I could not even oblige by offering any convincing explanation other than that as far back as I can remember—which, while by no means as far as your memory carries you, is still a decent

number of years—I have been thinking of a major's insignia as maple leaves! I was so sure of that taken-for-granted detail that I didn't even bother to reach to the bookcase, as I would have done, at once, had a naval officer been described. I am unable to pass the buck to any authority or so-called authority. Logically, oak is more appropriate; rather, it is more in the tradition, let us say.

That you encountered the same error in a novel you recently read is no appreciable consolation to me, as I have no reason for saying, in the light of any information that I can get—and I spent some time dredging into other sources!—that, as is often the case in debates dealing with the origins of military decoration-details, there is a second theory or tradition. While it may well be that the conventionalization of the oak leaf, and the diverse shapes of the leaves of the many species of oaks, could have led to confusion arising from the general shape of the major's insignia, I do not offer this in extenuation. Nor the statement, heard in the past couple days' scramble for background on the matter, to the effect that, "Well, they don't look much like oak leaves!"

I have spent some years gnashing my teeth at references to the *golden* stars of a general, and the *golden* eagles of a colonel. And references to so-and-so's *enlistment* as a captain. The drinks are on me, sir. Where I had most of Northern Luzon available for errors, I had to pick on maple leaves. About all I can add is that I was in error, I appreciate the moderation of the terms in which you call it to my attention; that I hope the story entertained you, and that in future issues, I can keep clear of botanical and other errors.

Meanwhile, there is an increasingly strong chance that I'll be getting some close looks at majors' insignia, though I do not see any large prospect of equaling your record in wearing them.

Yours sincerely,
E. Hoffmann Price

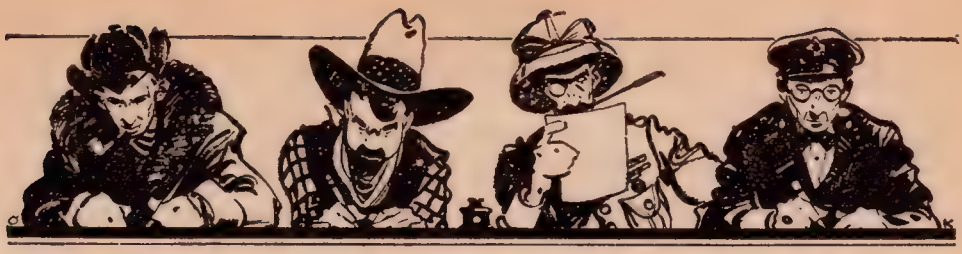
A gracious and properly penitent apology, we felt, to which we hasten to add our own, for we really knew better and should have caught Author Price's "inadvertence" (Boy! Is that a masterpiece of minimizing?) when editing the copy. Price, abject to the bitter end, appends the following—

I need hardly repeat that I regret such a bust, and as I told Dr. Wallace, I have not the foggiest idea how I got the fixed idea I have carried ever since I became interested in military matters, early in 1917. Whether someone told me, or whether I read (as he did in a novel) that those were maple leaves, I can't say. You might assume that on one occasion at school, when I was yanked before a board of three majors to explain why I had appeared in the area of barracks in "improper uniform," I might have made good use of the chance to scrutinize majors' insignia at close range. The fact is that, aside from publications such as the SOLDIERS MANUAL—INFANTRY, there weren't many references to what kind of a leaf. It was gold, and you'd better salute the guy! At the Point, we memorized "Scott's Fixed Opinion," and Tilden's definition of leather, but unhappily, the botany of majors' and lieutenant colonels' shoulder decorations did not receive the emphasis I now realize they should have gotten.

I hope the enclosed picture doesn't make you think I'm kinked on that saying of Confucius about a picture being worth 1000 words. It is, however, in my opinion, one of the most apt things the old boy ever said, even though not the most subtle. But it would be hell for writers if the notion got universal acceptance—a possibility which, frankly, does worry me at times. If I were Genghis Khan, I would make a skull pyramid, 100 per cent of the contributions being from editors and publishers of picture mags.

But I digress: ever since hearing from you and Dr. Wallace, I've been sending out questionnaires as to what kind of a leaf, and who told you so? The first victim, a lieutenant colonel of coast ar-

(Continued on page 127)



ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

THE anthropophagites of Tiburon.

Request:—Could you recommend a number of books that would give me as much information as possible concerning the island of Tiburon in the Gulf of California? I understand the place is the home of the Seri Indians, supposedly cannibal, and I am interested in their history, customs, etc.

—J. B. Ryan
Box 394
Coal City, Ill.

Reply by J. W. Whiteaker:—Tiburon Island lies off the coast of Sonora in almost a direct line from Hermosillo. It is separated from the mainland by El Canal del Infiernillo (Little Hell Strait). The island is mountainous and culminates in a peak which rises about 7,000 feet above the surrounding sea. It is inhabited by a fierce race of Indians (Seris, of the Yuman family) with anthropophagous instincts. Their canoes are of curious construction; open so that the water enters and remains at the same level as without. The Indians shoot turtles and fish with great skill, using bow and arrows. Poisoned arrows are employed when hunting game or enemies. Fishermen captured by them are sometimes eaten. The climate is hot during the summer often reaching over the 100 degree mark.

The rainfall is moderate in the mountainous section of the Island. The Island is about 28 miles from North to South and about 15 miles across from East to West.

The population is about 200 Indians of the Serian tribe from the coast of Sonora and a few Indians from the California peninsula of the Yuman family.

There is very little known about the Island except information gathered from fishermen who have fished near the Island. I do not know of any books that you could obtain that would deal more comprehensively with this subject.

RIBBONS and bars, medals and stars.

Request:—I am a M.M. 1/c U.S.N.R. Have been on active duty since May 26, 1941. Was at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, on board the U.S.S. *Solace* (ship's company).

Can you tell me if there has been issued a ribbon or bar for Pearl Harbor? Can I wear my ribbon for Conn. State 10 years' service? Do I rate a star on my defense bar? I have the Naval Reserve ribbon. Can you tell me the order of precedence of the above?

—Wm. R. Behler, M.M. 1/c
c/o Y.M.S. #115
San Diego, Calif.

Reply by Lieut. Durand Kiefer, U.S.N. (Ret.):—In answer to your questions—

(1) There has been no special medal issued for veterans of Pearl Harbor.

(2) State-issued decorations are not regulation on U. S. Navy uniforms except by special authorization of the Bureau of Personnel, Navy Department, in each particular case.

(3) You are entitled to wear one bronze star on your American Defense Service ribbon if you were on sea-duty or shore duty on a station outside the continental limits of the U. S. between Sept. 8, 1939 and Dec. 7, 1941.

(4) Precedence of medals mentioned above are as follows: American Defense Service Medal, (Good Conduct Medal), Naval Reserve Medal.

Medals are worn in order of precedence from top down and from inboard to outboard on the left breast.

(Continued from page 103)

cannot afford it. We must be happy and satisfied if we have enough bullets for our rifles, and enough powder for our guns. Some later day, perhaps."

"You need bullets for your rifles, and you need men to fight. Your men are dying from their wounds."

"Yes, our men are dying from their wounds." The soldier nodded. "But then, who cares? We have more men to fight this war, millions of men. Seven for every enemy soldier. Who cares if they die? There will be more."

The shadows were still moving past them, silent and grim. There will be more. . . .

"But it is not right," said the soldier, and he seemed to be talking to himself. "It is not right. The generals train our officers and the officers train our men, and the men are wounded and they lie unattended and it is gangrene that kills them, not the enemy."

"You do not need generals. You need doctors," Patricia said bitterly.

"Yes," said the man, "we need doctors." Then, to their astonishment, he drew himself up with remarkable energy and re-entered the file of trudging men. And there was something in his gait that made them think that he would reach the hospital even if he had to walk twenty-five *li*. Catastrophes had bred more than resignation in this race. They had bred strength. If victories had anything to do with the survival of the fittest, these men would be victorious in the end.

"We need doctors." Robert and Patricia stood on the edge of the precipice, and they saw the gray column below worm its way east like a sick caterpillar.

THE pallor at the horizon had turned into purple and in it there appeared the glow of a bright flare. The sun rose, with spectacular suddenness, precisely over the point where the caravan road lost itself between the soft silhouettes of the hills. It broke out like a geyser of fire from the distal haze, and it threw flames into the sky and hard shadows into the valley.

"Over there," said Robert. "That is where I shall take you. There are towns in the valley, and airports. I shall get you back to Shanghai safe and sound."

Strange—but in this pristine morning air his voice rang unconvincingly.

Patricia leaned against him and her eyes followed the long road. "To Shanghai?" she echoed, absently.

"You will be safe again," said Robert. "You will walk in peace and sleep in peace. The spell is broken."

"I shall walk in peace and sleep in peace," Patricia repeated slowly as though she did not quite believe it. Then, suddenly: "Why are you taking me to Shanghai, Robert?"

"I had an offer, before I left the city. To sell the hong for nothing but the debts—Kurtz and his noble friends of the New Order. You think I should accept it?"

"I think you did accept," said Patricia, "five minutes ago."

He saw the sick caterpillar below. It was moving toward the east. There, in the towns and villages of the valley, and in the towns and villages of a thousand valleys beyond, dwelled a people stronger than death. People that had grown tough and stolid and humble, all at once, and that would survive the whipping of this war as they had survived other whippings before. A people fit for victory. A people too grand to die.

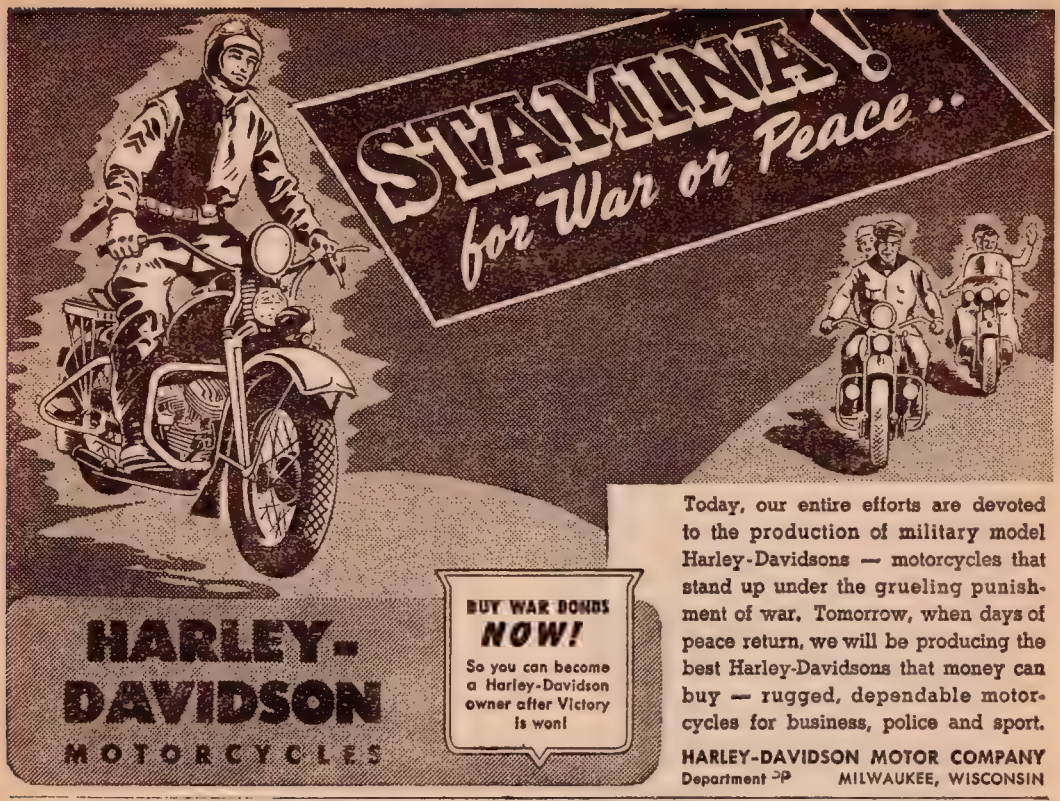
"We need doctors. . . ."

The golden blaze at the horizon had brought a warm light into Patricia's eyes. Slowly Robert turned the heads of their horses toward the sloping trail. They led them down, joining the thinning ranks of the soldiers. It was twenty-five *li* to the hospital. . . .

Where the mule path met the caravan road, down at the foot of the overhanging precipice, there was a temple. The wounded soldiers entered its small courtyard where incense burned in front of a primitive altar to say their prayers before they resumed their course. An aged priest tended the sanctuary in a gown whose color had once been orange.

"What deity is worshipped here?" they asked.

"It is Kuan Yin," he chanted, "the goddess of mercy . . . Kuan Yin, the all-compassionate, who heareth the cry of the world."



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Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are now engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which have been set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men have consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work is of secondary importance to their official duties. This is as it should be, so when you don't receive answers to queries as promptly as you have in the past please be patient. And remember that foreign mails are slow and uncertain these days, many curtailed drastically. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL P. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Boxing—LIEUT. COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 1619 Mass. Ave. N.W., Wash., D. C.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

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Anthropology—*American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders* — MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rock Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

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Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edw., H. S., Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N J

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, care of *Adventure*.

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Philippine Islands — BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure*.

★**New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 169 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Ingle Nook," 39 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York City.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.* — CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.* —GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia.*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

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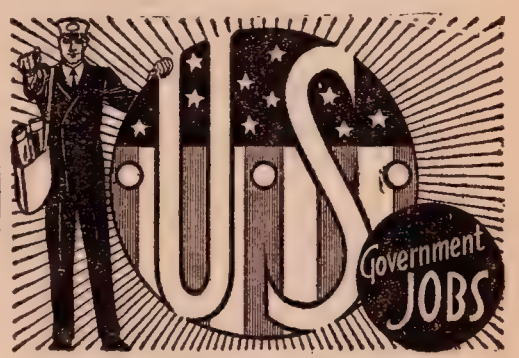

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(Continued from page 120)

tillery popped off, "Why, hell, maple! That's what I always thought." Oddly, his wife had thought it was oak, though apparently it had never been a subject for breakfast table discussions. I'm circularizing a few majors. Not in any attempt to justify my own boner, but just out of plain damn curiosity, I want to find out why this Lt. Colonel (Class of '18) shared my delusion.

So I had him take off one of his shoulder insignia, we stepped out into my one-fourth acre of game preserve, and got us some oak leaves, and set up this picture. Unhappily, of all the many kinds of oaks, 200 odd, I believe, only 2 occur in this limited area. And thus I've proved nothing at all, though I believe the set-up does have certain interest. (For the camera department: Eastman Background -X, 200 watt Birdseye spot, 1 second, f-16.)

All we can say is that it won't happen again and that Price's "Last Boat from Zamboanga" in our next has neither majors nor maple leaves to confuse the issue. It's just a damn good story!

IN AN effort to anticipate any queries that might arrive regarding those fabulous berries of the species *lush* which played such an important part in the Wetjen story, "Raid on Jigger's Reef," last month, we wrote the author for further information. We had attempted to check on the fatal fruit in various and sundry encyclopediae, botanies and texts and all to no avail and wanted either confirmation of their existence or confession of a fictional figment before foisting them on a group of all-too discerning readers who want to know just what they're eating before starting to chew. Dick Wetjen's reply arrived from California too late to include in the same issue with the story but we give it to you here—with all due apologies to Dick for having doubted him and his lushberries even one minute.

I had a very specialized library on the South Seas, unfortunately not available

(Continued on page 129)

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Georges Surdez gives us "The Deserter" and takes us to Oran the night the Americans landed. An old pensioner and a deserter—both ex-Legionnaires—help pave the way, each according to his lights, for the furious drama that begins to unfold. . . . E. Hoffmann Price in "Last Boat from Zamboanga" introduces Kane, who hated the Islands with his whole soul for years, then learned overnight—from a Moro, a Bishop, and a mule named Daniel-Come-To-Judgment—that what he'd really hated was himself and that there were infinitely more despicable things abroad on which to vent his spleen. . . . Frank Ebey in "the Cadet Store Coat" gives us a heartwarming story of the Civil War and a soldier who looked too well in his uniform. . . . Ben Merson in "The Anchor from Murmansk" takes us on convoy to Arctic Russia and back with Captain Wyncoop who had his own unorthodox methods of coping with the submarine menace. . . . Plus gripping yarns by Frank Richardson Pierce, Hal G. Evarts, William P. Schramm, Montgomery M. Atwater, James Vale Downie—and the usual interesting facts and features that can't be found in any other magazine.

Adventure

On Sale March 10th

(Continued from page 127)

at the time I wrote the story, so when I could not remember the real name of the berry I had to make shift and coin one. (No wonder we couldn't locate our lush!) Thinking hard after getting your letter it seems to me that the real name of the shrub is Ope or Oap. I haven't been in the Islands since '37 so my memory is naturally wobbly. But I do know it exists.

These berries and the stalks give out a sort of milky fluid that dumped in the water stun or drug the fish and bring them on top. I've seen the stuff used in Fiji and Samoa both, and in some parts of northern Australia. I was told it knocks a man like a Mickey Finn. I would send my secretary down to the library to look into this business, except my secretary has gone to the shipyards at ten bucks a day. If you get any queries on the lush-berry stuff send them along to me and I'll answer.

The stuff does exist, so you needn't worry on that angle.

Dick, our conscience is clear—well, reasonably clear—we haven't gone hunting for ope or oaps yet—and we're sure they're just where you say they are so we don't think we'll bother. It's all in your hands from this point on.

Incidentally, Author Wetjen is working on one of his Australian black tracker stories for us and we hope to be able to announce it shortly.—K.S.W.

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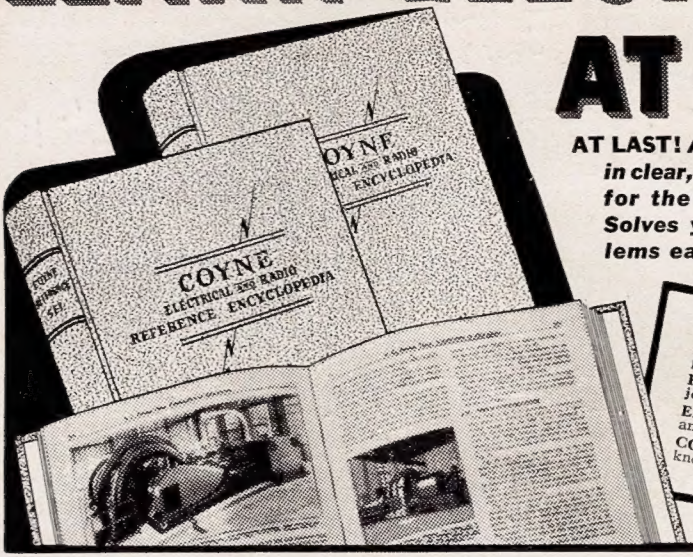

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